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A woman of courage ...p.10

Where are the women?...p.12

60th year of publication

Can Palestine extricate itself from chaos?

Harry der Nederlanden

Late last summer we were watching television footage of the forcible removal of Israeli settlers from Gaza. Less than 12 months later, Israeli tanks are once again rolling back across the border as Israel searches for an Israeli soldier abducted by Palestinian militants. The Israeli action was also taken because the Palestinian Authority has been unable to prevent rocket attacks on Israel launched from Gaza.

The unilateral withdrawal of Israel last year and the Palestinian elections held in January of this year had raised hopes that perhaps some progress was at last being made, if not toward actual peace, at lest toward an easing of hostilities.

Fatah marching to support Abbas

But however good his intentions, Mahmoud Abbas has not been able to bring law and order to his own people. Even before the elections in late January, militant factions of Fatah, his own party, were at each other's throats. At one point, angered that their leader had been arrested by the Palestinian Authority for kidnapping, one faction overran a border checkpoint on Gaza's border with Egypt, killing a couple of Egyptian soldiers.

Abbas' Fatah party lost the election to the more Islamist Hamas largely because it was unable to deliver orderly and just government to the region. According to analysts, Palestinian voters saw Hamas as a more united and disciplined force, so they voted for Hamas to provide internal order not for its hardline stance committed to the destruction of the state of Israel.

The international community, however, could hardly embrace Hamas as long as it clings to its commitment to wipe Israel off the map. This makes it a terrorist organization. To recognize Hamas, it appears, would be to give up on the prospect of a peaceful two-state solution, so those countries providing aid to Palestine, Canada included, decided after much hesitation to withhold aid and impose sanctions until Hamas repudiated its stance on Israel. There were many critics of that policy (including the World Council of Churches) because the Palestinian people are heavily dependent on such aid. Its complete withdrawal would make life almost impossible in parts of Palestine, for unemployment is over 20 percent in the West Bank and 35 percent in Gaza (estimates vary greatly), and many of the existing jobs are government jobs. Without foreign aid, according to a Reuters report, unemployment would rise to over 60 percent in Gaza, and even to 80 percent in the long run. This would only exacerbate lawlessness and chaos.

On the other hand, because so many jobs depend on foreign aid channeled through the government, this has also been a source of conflict. There have been clashes not just between Fatah and Hamas about access to jobs but even between factions within Fatah.

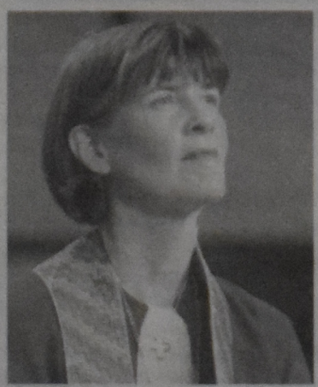
Nevertheless, the effort to force a commitment to the peace process with sanctions is bound to make conditions within Palestine more volatile. It is also crippling the ability of Abbas and the Palestinian Authority (already less than stellar) to keep the peace.

To avoid a complete meltdown of social order in Palestine, the US, Europe and Russia have put their heads together to work out a way to send aid to the Palestinian people that will by-pass Hamas. The funds are supposed to pay minimal salaries to those in healthcare and education and provide food for the poor.

The Israeli incursion into Gaza to recover the abducted soldier has succeeded at least in at last uniting Hamas and Fatah. It has shown that, like Fatah, Hamas has not been able to impose enough discipline

See **Palestine** . . . *p.3*

Mainline denominations address divisive issues, homosexuality



Joan S. Gray, moderator of the 217th General Assembly

Harry der Nederlanden

The assemblies of two of the largest mainline denominations in America made the headlines last month – the Episcopalian Church in the USA and the Presbyterian Church in the USA. The eye of the secular media was on them because they were talking about sex: whether to strike down all prohibitions against gays and lesbians in church leadership.

Quite a few of the headlines had the word "split" in the title, but that has featured prominently in newspaper stories about these denominational meetings for several years. Not coincidentally, both denominations have recently commissioned long reports. Theological/biblical studies of sexuality, homosexuality and ethics? No, studies on the issue of church unity and how to live together with deep differences. The attention, in other words, has shifted from theology to social dynamics.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

The Presbyterian Church (USA), the largest Presbyterian

Bishop Kathleen J. Schori

denomination in the US (and like the CRC a member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches), voted June 20 to allow local and regional bodies to ordain gays to the church's ministries. After nearly three hours of debate, delegates voted 298 to 221 to approve a complex proposal that allows local congregations and presbyteries (the equivalent of

Continued on p. 2...

News

Mainline denominations ... *continued from page 1*

classes) to bypass the church's current ban on "self-avowed practicing" gay clergy.

It did not remove regulations from the church order that require "fidelity in marriage ... and chastity in singleness" but allows presbyteries to allow exceptions to that rule.

The proposal was one of seven contained in a report by the theological task force that has spent four years looking for ways to help the denomination stay together despite its differences. The report urged all Presbyterians "to avoid division into separate denominations," a warning also sounded by the Setri Nyomi, general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

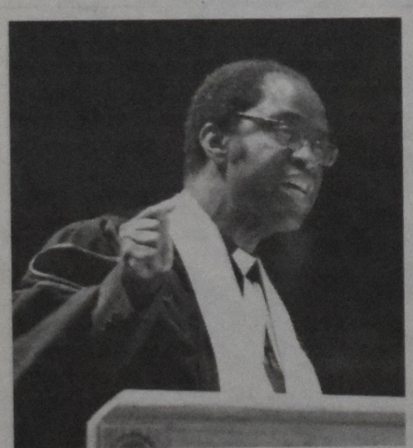
"Everything is seen as a disposable good, including relationships and the oneness of the church," he said, urging members to "lay aside every weight and sin" – especially divisiveness and fragmentation – in order to run the race of faith properly.

Ten conservative Presbyterian groups warned jointly that approval of what they call "local option" would "promote schism by permitting the disregard of clear standards of Scripture."

"When the constitution is set aside and something mandatory is reduced to something optional, it destroys the constitution," said Robert Gagnon, a professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and author of a book opposing homosexual relationships. Mr. Gagnon said the denomination had reached "a transition point" that broke from Jesus' teaching on man-woman monogamy.

The 2.3 million-member church has been debating this issue and the related issue of Biblical authority for nearly 30 years. The more conservative Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), which now has more than 300,000 members, came into existence in the late 1970s when many members parted ways with their denomination.

Opponents of the decision also argued that it will lead to alienation from Presbyterian churches in Africa and Asia and could cause thousands of Korean members to withdraw from the church and align themselves with the PCA or with other conservative Presbyterian denominations.



Setri Nyomi, general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches

Another controversial report entitled "The Trinity: God's Love Overflowing" sought to compensate for the predominantly male imagery for God. Language limited to the Father and Son "has been used to support the idea that God is male and that men are superior to women," the theological task force said. While maintaining the traditional designation for the Trinity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the church's "anchor language," it recommended a number of alternatives that are less patriarchal:

— Mother, Child and Womb
— Lover, Beloved, Love
— Creator, Savior, Sanctifier
— Rock, Redeemer, Friend
— King of Glory, Prince of Peace, Spirit of Love

Two professors from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Andrew Purves and Charles Partee, warned of the danger that "we not only lose the ground for our language for God, we in fact lose the Trinity. We lose God."

"We do not need a diluted, metaphorical Trinity; rather, we need our confidence in the Christian doctrine of God to be restored," they said.

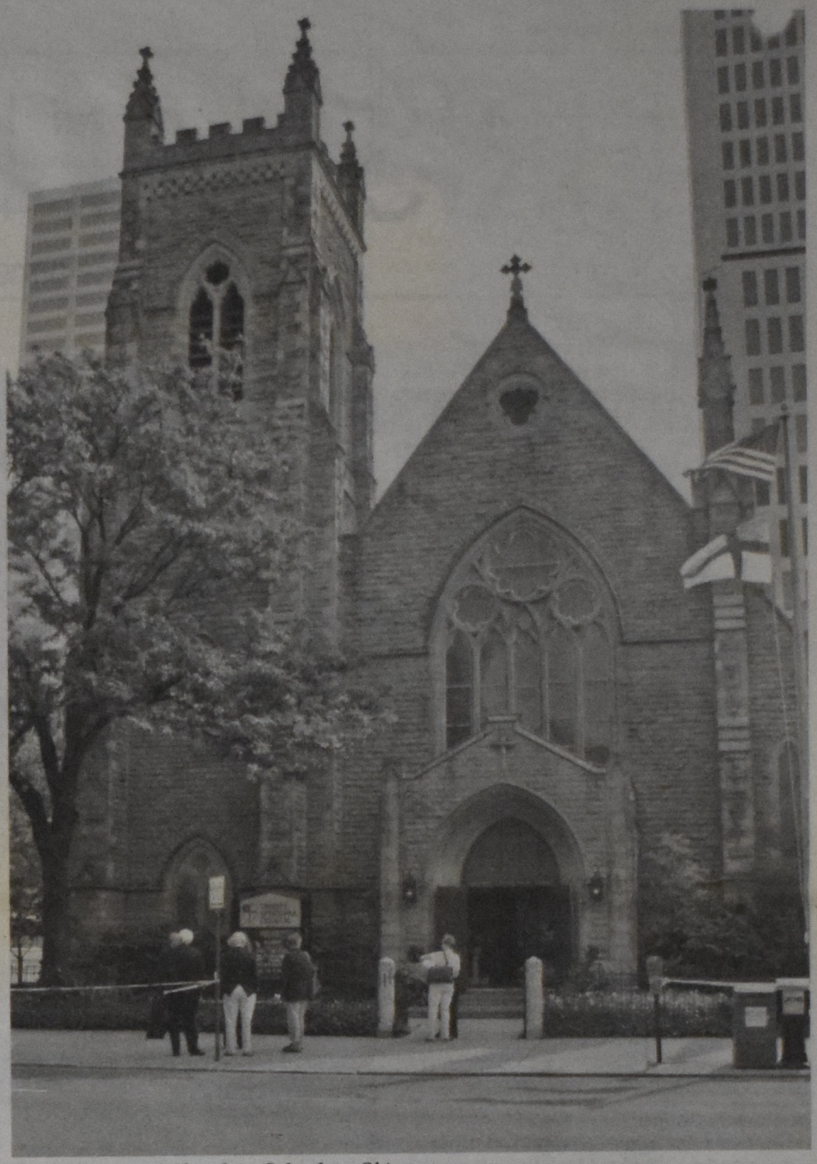
Susan Cyre, pastor of Dublin Presbyterian Church, said: "It fails to clearly, consistently and accurately make a distinction between the names of God and the attributes and works of God described in metaphors and similes. Names and metaphors and similes are not the same. God is like a mother hen, but God is not a mother hen and mother hen is not a name of God."

The assembly also recommended to the churches a major study paper called "Just Globalization: Justice, Ownership, and Accountability" which seeks to educate Presbyterians on the sweeping influence and implications of globalization on a number of levels: individual discipleship, implications for congregational and presbytery mission, international governance, trade practices and issues for development assistance.

Delegates spent a lot of time listening to interpretations of the Palestinian situation and discussing last years decision that called for divestment from Israel. It backed off from a policy that has hurt the church's relationship with Jews and opted instead for a more positive approach to furthering peace in the region.

Among other political issues dealt with were torture and terrorism, both of which were condemned, US policy in Colombia, the employment practices of a local meat packing plant and the medical use of marijuana.

The denomination reported a net loss of 48,474 members since last year, the 40th annual decline in a row, leaving 2.3 million active members.



Trinity Episcopal Church in Columbus, Ohio

The General Convention of the Episcopalian Church in the USA

The General Convention of the Episcopalian Church in the USA elected Katharine Jefferts Schori, the bishop of Nevada, as its presiding bishop, the first time a female has been elected to the office. Only Canada and New Zealand have female bishops, and many Anglicans around the world believe that women should not be ordained. There's an added complication: she is an outspoken advocate for non-celibate homosexuals in the leadership of the church. In a sermon that she preached at the convention, Schori referred to "Mother Jesus," noting that Jesus gives new birth to a new creation and we are his children.

In another action that did not sit well with conservatives, the General Convention voted down a temporary ban to keep non-celibate homosexuals from becoming bishops. The church had been urged to make such a decision by the so-called Windsor Report. The rejection of the Windsor recommendation, critics feel, will likely be the "last straw" by many conservative archbishops who provide the bulk of the leadership in the worldwide Anglican Church and taken as a breaking of fellowship.

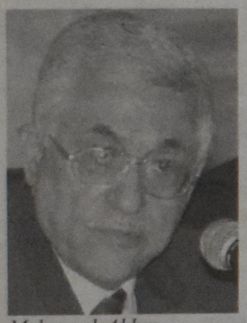
The assembly did urge churches to exercise restraint in considering openly homosexual candidates for bishop. And it also expressed "regret" that other Anglicans were offended when ECUSA consecrated a homosexual bishop three years ago.

A conservative network of ten diocese and some 900 parishes said they would leave the church if it does not enact bans on gay and lesbian bishops and the blessing of same-sex unions. Some parishes already have left the church to affiliate with the Anglican Mission in America, which has more than 100 parishes and about 10,000 members, all under the oversight of conservative Anglican archbishops from Africa and Asia.

Among other actions, the Convention condemned slavery and talked about reparations, and it considered writing a liturgy for the death of "man's best friend" [oops – *person's* best friend].

Politics

Palestine ... continued from p. 1



Mahmoud Abbas

to keep militant factions from launching rockets attacks on Israel either. While Abbas was trying to help Israel locate the abducted soldier, leaders of more militant factions were urging their followers to kidnap more Israeli soldiers to exchange for the hundreds of prisoners in Israeli jails. Near the end of May, however, a group of Hamas leaders held in Israeli jails called on Hamas to sign to sign a document recognizing the state of Israel.

Abbas threatened that if Hamas did not sign, he would hold a referendum on the issue. According to polls taken at the time, about two-thirds of Palestinians support the recognition of Israel and a two-state solution, while about 75 percent want Hamas to negotiate with Israel. Despite huge popular support for such a referendum, however, Hamas has adamantly opposed it, for it was beginning to be viewed as a referendum against Hamas itself and a vote for Abbbas.

For a few days in mid-June, it looked as if the tensions between the two parties were about to erupt into full-scale civil war. In both Gaza and the West Bank, the two groups exchanged gunfire, and forces loyal to Fatah seized government offices as Hamas threatened to block the referendum. Only the killing of a number of Palestinians picnicking on a beach seemed to bring the two sides together against Israel. Initially the incident was reported as an Israeli missile strike on Palestinian civilians, but it now appears likely that it was the result of a Palestinian rocket.

At last Fatah and Hamas met to negotiate an agreement designed to provide a way for the two to share power. They had already come to agreement on most points before Israel invaded Gaza, but the invasion, it seems, was the nudge needed to finally bring the two to agreement.

Both groups badly need to show the Palestinian people that they can do something to bring order instead of disorder to the country. The agreement doesn't completely ban all attacks on Israel, but it does limit them. Whether this is meaningful remains to be seen. The phrasing is vague enough to permit Hamas to recognize Israel's existence without explicitly embracing a permanent two-state solution.

It is all only paper, however, if the various leaders and factions do not honor it and if the Palestinian government cannot actually rule.

Hamas-leader Mahmoud al-Zahar

'The union with a difference'

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

Koyzis, in solidarity with his CLAC protégés

Although I have taught at Redeemer University College for just under two decades, I have long had an unofficial relationship with the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) and have come to be a strong supporter of its ongoing efforts to secure and maintain justice in the workplace. The primary basis for this relationship is the fact that over the years any number of graduates of Redeemer's political science program have joined the organization as either labour representatives or researchers. In fact, I'd be hard pressed to name them all at the moment. But the number is such that, when I've passed from the scene, it may well be judged that my principal legacy will have been, not in politics or political science, but, albeit indirectly, in the field of labour relations.

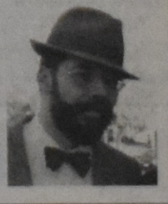
The CLAC was founded in 1952 on principles sharply distinguishing it from other North American trade unions, with their focus on an adversarial model of labour/management relations. While the secular unions have usually viewed management as the enemy to whom no benefit of the doubt is owed, the CLAC's philosophy is based on a co-operative model, with an emphasis on "integrity, respect, partnership, fairness, and community," as its website puts it. From the outset the CLAC was viewed with suspicion by the other unions, which attempted at every turn to throw obstacles, both legal and practical, in its way. In the early years a primary basis for CLAC's work was its network of solidarity locals, bringing together followers of its vision to support its efforts to bring justice to the workplace.

Throughout North America labour union membership has declined over the decades. For example, the United Auto Workers boasted a membership of 1.5 million in 1979, when it was at its peak. However, in 2002 UAW membership stood at 676,000 and by this year it had dropped further to 599,000. By contrast, the CLAC is one of the few unions that is growing. Although it remains small by union standards, it now represents just short of 40,000 members, a number that is quickly increasing. If current trends continue, the CLAC will eventually outpace the UAW and other unions, which will have no choice but to take note of the successful CLAC model.

In representing workers in a variety of industries, the CLAC does not discriminate based on the faith of its members. In choosing to be represented by the CLAC, thousands of workers across Canada – many of whom are not Christians – nevertheless like the nonadversarial model it uses in defending their interests. However much the major unions may try to malign the CLAC, results speak louder than rhetoric, and this is helping to fuel the rapid growth of "the union with a difference."

Of course, with such a diverse membership, it is possible that the CLAC, like so many other formerly confessionally-based unions, could see its principles eroded with the passage of time. Accordingly, there is an effort to revive the CLAC's solidarity locals, which, it is hoped, will renew the crucial relationship between the union and its support base in the christian community. John Taekema, Dan Huget and Brian Dijkema (a Redeemer graduate) are spearheading this effort in Alberta, BC and Ontario respectively. Given the importance of good labour relations to the doing of justice, I would strongly urge readers to join and support these solidarity locals.

The CLAC is now into its second half century. No longer a small, struggling organization, it nevertheless still needs the support of believing Christians who understand the scope of Christ's redemption and sovereignty over the whole of life.



David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of the award-winning Political Visions and Illusions *(InterVarsity Press). His weblog can be found at:* <http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/>.

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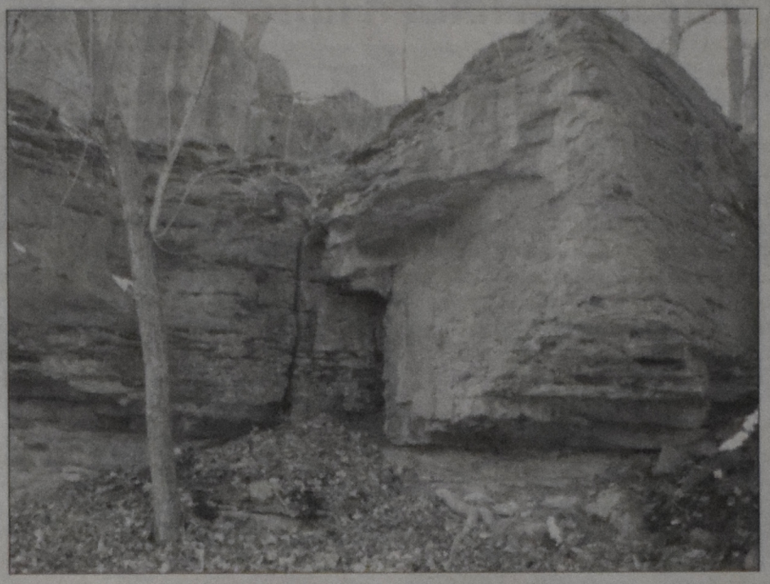
Editorial

On kicking rocks and words

Harry der Nederlanden



This week I planned to write a meditation on grass. As a first step, I took pictures of different kinds of grasses that grow in the fields and forests around St. Catharines. To further coax inspiration out of my dull soul, I even waded through huge fields where the tall grasses stung my face like flying grasshoppers as their yellow heads whipped in the summer breezes.

I discovered that it is hard to take pictures of grass, especially on auto-focus. The grass is too thin, too insubstantial. My camera kept focusing on something else. I took that as a hint. Grass, my camera was telling me, is too insubstantial for thinking concrete thoughts.

Soon my attention was diverted elsewhere. Higher themes beckoned. The assembly of the largest Presbyterian church in the US, the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA), debated a report that suggested different names for the Trinity. Some people are offended, it seems, by that Father – Son – Holy Spirit trialogue. Too patriarchal. Too much bass. How do we introduce a little lightness, a little soprano into the Trinity?

This was, I thought, a more substantial theme than mere grass. From surface appearance I moved to depth, from the fleeting to the eternal.

However, only a little ways into the PCUSA report on naming God, I realized that this wasn't about something more substantial after all. Names are, I was reminded, nothing more than sounds, mere whistling air like the susurrus of the summer breezes whispering through the grass.

Did you ever think of the blades of grass as keen knife blades gently cutting the air into sibilant syllables? Perhaps not. We don't like to think of grass as threatening. It is fragile, fleeting. Shoulder high today, mown down tomorrow.

Names too, though as insubstantial as grass and summer breezes, have an edge to them. They cut. Some say they slice and dice the world with all the violence of Genghis Kahn. They not only cut up reality; they also carve themselves deep into the human mind. Even into the heart. No wound deeper than that caused by a word.

But to employ words to tailor him who is the Word to fit human fashion seems presumptuous. An act of violence. That's why there have always been negative theologians who speak of God only to say what he isn't. For no term, no name that we use to chop up the world to manageable size can do justice to him who is above all, around all and in all.

The PCUSA report, however, goes in the opposite direction. Instead of being careful and economical with names when it comes to speaking of God, it suggests that we are "liberated to interpret, amplify, and expand upon the ways of naming the triune God." Instead of God's Word serving as the anchor to him who is, it becomes a springboard, a launching pad from which our imaginations may leap free of all gravity to invent Trinities in the stratosphere.

Here are some of the triads the report offers: "Rainbow, Ark and Dove," "Speaker, Word and Breath," "Overflowing Font, Living Water and Flowing River," "Compassionate Mother, Beloved Child and Life-Giving Womb," "Sun, Light and Burning Ray," "Giver, Gift and Giving," "Lover, Beloved and Love," "Rock, Cornerstone and Temple," "Fire that Consumes, Sword that Divides and Storm that Melts Mountains," and "The One Who Was, The One Who Is and The One Who Is to Come."

After reading that list, I began to understand why people have been walking away from the PCUSA. Not that God doesn't spur us to use our imaginations in the names he has given us. And not that we are limited to the Father, Son, Holy Spirit triad or to male imagery. But it is he who gives us the words by which he comes closer to us and allows us to approach him. The game launched by the PCUSA theologians does precisely the opposite. It renders God wholly formless, fluid, without face or feature.

I was mulling over these thoughts the other day as I was out walking in the Niagara Gorge. In places the trail passes beneath rocks bigger than a house. Scripture refers to God as a rock, and Paul calls Jesus the rock. Quite a contrast to the airy-fairy way that the report talks of God. The rocks I walked under were solid, scary, immense and immoveable. But if they moved, they'd crush you in an instant. Scripture, however, uses that rock imagery to comfort us with his stability and dependability. He is a rock that doesn't move.

As I was walking along musing about words and rocks, I recalled a story one of my teachers once told in philosophy class. In fact, Prof. Nick van Til probably told the story more than once. It was about the bishop/philosopher Berkeley. Reality only appears to be solid and substantial, argued the bishop. Actually, it is all appearance. It gets its shape and seeming solidity only in interaction with our senses. You and I and all of reality are but ideas in the mind of God.

He was making this argument to Samuel Johnson, when the other strode over to a stone and gave it a quick kick. That was Johnson's answer.

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Editor: Harry der Nederlanden editor@christiancourier.ca
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden rose@christiancourier.ca
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer ads@christiancourier.ca

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Stones into thoughts

[For Nick van Til]

What would Samuel Johnson
have said, one wonders –
for the moment is wonderful –
if, when he'd demonstrated
the world's brute resistance
by kicking the stone
lying providentially in his path,
the stone had suddenly
begun to roll, growing
ever larger and larger
until it grew into a world?

That would have
bowled Johnson over,
and Bishop Berkeley
would have laughed in glee.

Or suppose the stone had
cried out hosannas
like those coiled to seize
the initiative along the road
leading into Jerusalem?

That would have stumbled
the Enlightenment Pharisees
but delighted the kids
throwing rocks at the bishop
and his fat friend.

What if the stone had broken
into many stones
like the loaves of bread
when Jesus fed the multitudes –
and then reassembled
themselves into a temple
into a church, the Hagia Sophia,
that light-infused space
unveiling the molecular
in-substantiality of wisdom?

That would have awed
the stonecutters and masons
and others who daily break stones
like bread in the sweat of
their bowed backs.

Standing in the stone-shaped
light of the cathedral,
maybe, instead of cursing
his injured toe, Johnson
would have learned something
sacred, mystical
about words and stones and kicking
and other liturgical acts.

But stones have a way
of burrowing deep
underground out of sight
resting beneath walls
stabilizing homes, churches,
towers, towns, entire cities
making roadbeds
guiding wheels
breaking wheels
awaiting their turn
to speak their name.

Letters

What life-perspectives will lead Canada?

If the Conservative government's plan for fixed federal election dates becomes political reality, the life of the current minority Parliament could well mean that Canadians may not go to the polls again until October 2009 – unless, of course, the Harper government loses the confidence of the House of Commons before then.

Such a vote of non-confidence will either be self-engineered by the Conservatives or it will be introduced by the opposition parties if their ideological differences with the long-term policies and the emerging platform of the "Harperites" force them to more pointedly assert their respective parties' agendas.

If this happens, the parties, especially the leaderless Liberals, would have no real choice but to spell out their established positions and new programs, specific alternatives and ideological premises. It would oblige them to consult the Canadian voters and express their particular priorities and political goals, both with respect to *domestic* policy issues – such as economic, environmental, health and socio-economic investments and taxation policies – and with regard to *foreign* policy questions – such as Canada's responsibilities and distinct roles in war-torn Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Darfur and the growing complexity of Canada-U.S. relations.

These domestic and foreign policy areas inevitably raise the direct relevance of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and its demand for public justice and responsibility by all, and for all, including good care for the fragile creation. Then, there are the *United Nations Charter* and the relevant international agreements, covenants, declarations, protocols and treaties and the fundamental principles of equity, fairness, freedom, justice, responsibility and solidarity and the consistent promotion and practice of human rights and social responsibilities without discrimination.

As Canada and our world enter a new era of national responsibility and global solidarity, our political parties, social movements, educational enterprises, and economic organizations – we all, citizens and leaders alike, are called to reflect on our basic commitments, core convictions and fundamental values. We must seek to give fresh expression to and new perspectives on our personal and communal tasks to build a more humane, just and peaceful world where all people can live with real, God-given dignity and all will experience full, genuine respect, regardless of economic class, colour, race, religion, ideology or social status.

These crucial challenges clearly affect and involve the rights and the future of all native peoples, the homeless, the hungry and the poor, and especially the desperate plight of millions of children and voiceless women, who are crying daily and yearning for justice and basic support.

Of course, we must always come to the generous aid and the vigorous defence of numerous refugees and other victims of terrorism and war. All vulnerable people are precious in God's sight and entitled to inclusive justice.

All of the above (and more) present critical demands to all the Liberal candidates (and their supporters) who currently seek the national leadership of a rejuvenated party that desperately seeks to earn public recognition and political credibility. To be an authentic alternative to the other parties, to their value(s)-based perspectives and principled policy-platforms each party will have to ask itself how it will help to make a difference for the common public good of all people, both at home and abroad.

What will our party leaders and the various Liberal leadership candidates now do? Like Tommy Douglas, will they now courageously advocate that our country's government, institutions and organizations work for the well-being of Canadians, here in the active service of peace and inclusive justice? Will they give creative leadership on the basis of life-affirming and community-building values?

Ultimately, our personal and communal answers and actions will tell the world what kind of people(s) and nation we are. Then, our daily deeds will demonstrate what our Canadian values are, and who will actually benefit in the long run. May many concerted efforts in the service of full-fledged justice soon prevail from sea to sea to sea. May our country increasingly become a vital channel of living justice, a beacon of light and life and lasting peace the world over!

Gerald Vandezande
262 Pitfield RD.
Toronto ON M1S 1Y7
Tel: 416-293-8912

We do have enemies

Christian Courier is to be congratulated for the way in which it has facilitated good conversation on important social and political topics of our day, notably issues of war and peace and economic justice in places such as Latin America (June 12 issue). For this reason I am grateful to Messrs. Den Boggende, Vandezande, and Vander Vennen for the two items in the June 12 issue that directly addressed my articles on "Enemies." Both responses illustrate perfectly the precise concern I wanted to highlight and give me a chance to state my case more clearly and prevent misunderstanding.

This is an important discussion and we need to be clear on what is at stake.

Den Boggende objects that it is a mistake to allow a declared enemy to define me. He uses language such as "does not define me completely" because, so he says, I am responsible for self-definition and only God can truly define me. Well, of course, who I am truly is determined by God's love for me in Christ. That is not what is at issue here. I surely did not mean to imply that when an armed killer says he hates me and wants to kill me that I am somehow fully defined by that declaration and bound to be a hateful killer in turn. Ultimately who I am is determined by God's electing grace in Christ: I belong to Jesus!

But, that does nothing to alter my relation to the declared enemy *until* he too is reconciled to God in Christ and becomes my brother. If he continues to hate me, if he declares himself to be my enemy, I must pray for him, I must tell him that I do not hate him, I must bear witness to Jesus to him, but if he does not change his heart our relationship is still a relationship of enmity. He has made it so and my desire that it not be so does nothing to change it *until his heart is also changed.*

Until then, when an armed killer who declares himself to be my enemy comes at me and my loved ones with open hostility and clear intention to kill us, then the only reasonable *moral* obligation I have is to take his declaration seriously. Perhaps my only response is actively to hide rather than actively to resist. Well and good, but to deny it, to ignore it, to pretend it isn't so is not only foolish, it is also *morally* irresponsible and evil, especially for civil authorities who are charged with protecting the weak and vulnerable.

An example may help. In the late 1930s, some peace-loving Jews refused to believe that Hitler and his Nazi thugs were out to exterminate them. They thought if they only lived quiet, peaceful, inoffensive, and hidden lives, they would be spared. We know how tragically wrong they were. It is grievous moral error to deny or ignore declarations of hatred and enmity; we do so at the very peril of our lives. We have enemies and, as we found out again recently, they are right in our midst.

Both Den Boggende and Vandezande/Vander Vennen fault my articles for "dualistic thinking" that somehow fails to link "gospel shalom" or "vertical reconciliation" [to God] with this-worldly, horizontal justice and peace. I firmly plead "not guilty" here and want to point to a basic misunderstanding. Yes, the gospel of shalom, the good news that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, that to believe on the LORD Jesus Christ is to be saved – all this does impact and must impact the world of our social relationships and how we treat our neighbor. But how does it do that? How does the state's role fit in all this?

Here the Reformed tradition differs from the Anabaptist tradition. The Reformers always spoke of two kingdoms and insisted that it was a major mistake to try to apply to the kingdoms of this world (the state) the norms of the kingdom of God as such. For example, it was a mistake to think that "turning the other cheek" somehow meant that the state should disarm. Thus, to simply state that the gospel of shalom translates without further nuance and distinction to "peacemaking" understood as international conflict resolution, is a mistake, it is to confuse the two kingdoms, it is, in Calvin's words, to "mix heaven and earth." (Incidentally, the 2006 CRC Synod affirmed this distinction when it faulted the War and Peace Report for exactly this mistake of confusing gospel shalom with peacemaking. For the Christian the latter follows the former but they are distinct.)

My only point then and now is this: It is the church's task to try to change people's hearts through gospel proclamation. Not the state's! Furthermore, it is not the church's task to do the state's or citizen's job of peacemaking. The church must proclaim the gospel. Period.

The three brothers take a more Anabaptist position. That is their privilege and freedom, also in Christ. They should allow me to continue to hold the traditional Reformed position without the implication that this is somehow less Christian or less "peaceful."

John Bolt

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Nature

Go to the ant

Curt Gesch

I have a lot of trouble learning moral lessons from ants. I know that the verse in Proverbs 6:6 says that the ant should be teaching me wisdom: about getting the job done, about the colony having no commander. My problem is that I get stuck on the is and never get to the ought to.

I live in an area with an abundance of ants: black ants that make hills. Our hills are Lilliputian compared to termite mounts, but nothing to sneer at either. One of ours is over eight feet in diameter and sometimes three feet [1] high.

It is sometimes three feet high because bears like to eat ants. Bears, not being connoisseurs, dig into ant hills and lick off ants, grass, spruce needles, sand, ant eggs, larvae, and anything else they can stick into their craw. [2] Judging by the evidence, bears aren't bothered by the bites of ants. Either that or they are slow learners. In the springtime, we can chart the course of a wandering bear by observing the hectic rebuilding efforts of ants as we walk the edges of our fields from anthill to anthill.

Ants also build roads, a fact which may qualify them as consultants to our provincial highways department. There are apparently grass-cutting ants that do nothing but clear paths. Then there are the porters and teamsters who march along the road, and scouts who locate food. I measured one such trail and it was a four-lane highway (without centre divider) for about 60 feet (20 metres) before narrowing down and branching out into county roads, town roads, and country lanes.

Ants also provide food for flickers, a sort of plebeian woodpecker which often walks around horizontally picking up wandering cutters, teamsters, porters, and scouts. Alas, there are not enough flickers around to satisfy me.

And then there are the peony ants. I don't know if everyone has these, but I remember my Wisconsin grandfather's peony buds were just covered with black ants. They must have been feeding on something, but the peonies bloomed voluptuously despite the ants. These peony ants helped us children learn valuable skills. First, we learned how to flick the bud, sending ants flying without damaging the plant. This skill was highly prized but does not provide much income in the 21st century. The other skill was marksmanship. With a hose nozzle set on thin and high pressure, we regularly helped Grandpa with ant removal, while simultaneously providing the ants with rudimentary space flight.

Gardeners shouldn't be too hasty in ridding the area of ant hills, however. The big anthills that I have in my area provide a lovely garden mulch. I scoop up the loose top part of a large hill – about two five-gallon bucketsful (ants and all) and use them as a moisture-suppressing mulch around my perennials. The ants thus displaced are quite confused as to their new location, but I tell them, "Go find a peony and backtrack home."

I also learned that ants taught animal husbandry to human beings. They care for aphids (sometimes disparagingly called plant lice, which would be like calling a prized Frisian-Holstein a grass-guzzler). Aphids suck the juices from leaves but are prey to lady bugs, lacewings, and other insect predators. Ants protect the aphids from enemies, move them to greener pastures and "milk" them of the honeydew (a form of posterior extrusion) [3] which the ants use as high quality food.

Ants are fearless. When a human (perhaps an author of *Christian Courier* columns) gets within a couple feet of an aphid-herder ant on an apple twig, it grasps the twig with four feet and raises the front two and challenges the intruder with gaping mandibles.

My wife noticed a funny smell arising from these ants, especially when I defended her from a particularly nasty ant-herd. This reminded me of Ogden Nash's poem called, not surprisingly,

"Ant": 4
The ants has made himself illustrious
Through constant industry industrious.
So what?
Would you be calm and placid
If you were full of formic acid?

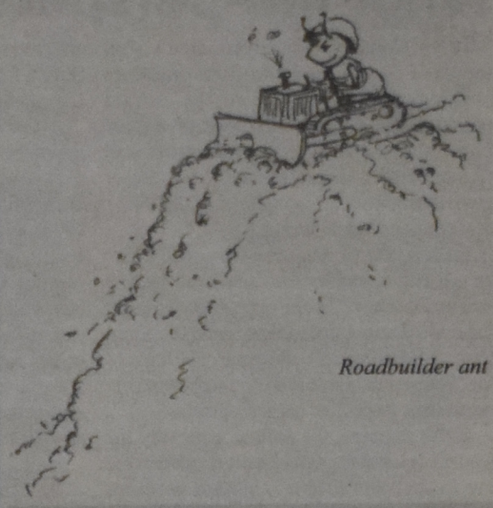
Armed with this knowledge we decided to sample some ants. So I crushed a dozen or so and licked the residue from my palm. Formic acid is not bad. I'd say it would go well with a good Cabernet, just a mite cute on the aftertaste. I'm thinking that aboriginal Australians are onto something.

*****

As I said, I can't seem to get around to learning the moral lessons ants have for me. I get too interested in simply living with them, finding out about them, even eating them. I hope it's all right that I'm fascinated by ants. I'll leave the moral lessons for you.

Notes:

1. *One metre for the chosen. I sometimes use imperial measurements so that the uncircumcised neighbors can understand better.*
2. *As of press time, we were unable to determine if all bears are teen-agers.*
3. *Poop.*
4. *Ogden Nash,* Wouldn't Have Missed It *(Selected Poems of Ogden Nash), Toronto, Little Brown and Company, 1972. Buy this book.*



Roadbuilder ant

ants

the sponge-like soil under my feet
the world of symbiosis
of smaller and smaller and smaller

here is a spruce tree
one raindrop falls, splits on one needle
the same way the light of the emerging sun
splits in each droplet of water
that arcs away from the spruce
and shows a split-second rainbow
before it adds to the dampness
of an anthill

here is a red ant
in her mandibles is a spruce needle
as big and heavy as herself,
both have a protective shining coat
that reflects, moist and glistening in the sun,
she pulls the spruce needle into a tunnel
and disappears into the dark soil
out of the sunlight

here is pitch black
here is the constant movement
of water downwards, drenching everything
and of ants upwards and all around
here is the deafeningly soundless taste and smell
of loam and decay and the acidity of ants,
the bulbous white eggs and larvae
pale white but still invisible in the dark

shaded by sponge-soil and spruce needles,
by the tree overhead dripping rain
even after the rain has stopped,
the same tree dropping also its needles
and its shadows to the ground

me standing in the sun beside it
noticing ants climbing in a straight line
up the bark

– Kelly Shepherd

Houseplants that help to clean indoor air

Jackson Schlemmer

One positive result of the 1970s energy crisis was the development and widespread adoption of improved insulation materials to maintain indoor energy efficiency. Unfortunately, however, many of these materials have compromised indoor air quality due to their tendency to "off-gas" various airborne toxins, including formaldehyde, trichloroethylene (TCE), benzene and other volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

Much of the synthetic carpeting, upholstery and paint used indoors also contain gases that get trapped inside air-tight homes and offices and which can build up gradually over time. And most synthetic air fresheners only make matters worse, adding even more harmful VOCs to the indoor air. With people spending as much as 90 percent of their time indoors, it may be no coincidence that cases of asthma and other respiratory diseases have been on the rise in recent years.

The unlikely hero in this scenario may in fact be the humble houseplant. In a landmark 1984 NASA study, commissioned to find ways to clean air in space bases and vehicles, Bill Wolverton found that some common houseplants actually cleaned polluted indoor air. He found that philodendrons and golden pothos excelled at stripping formaldehyde from the air, gerbera daisies and chrysanthemums wiped out excessive amounts of indoor benzene, and pot mums and peace lilies absorbed a toxic degreasing solvent known as TCE.

A later NASA study saw houseplants removing up to 87 percent of toxic indoor air within 24 hours. And a 1994 German study reported that one spider plant could cleanse a small room of formaldehyde in just six hours. Further, English ivy, bamboo palm and snake plants have been shown to be effective in removing cigarette smoke as well as noxious odors from carpeting and chemical-laden household cleaners.

Just how can a houseplant be so good at cleansing the air? The reason lies in its basic ability to absorb carbon dioxide from the air while releasing oxygen as part of the photosynthetic process. Houseplants are essentially doing indoors what other plants and trees ordinarily do outdoors.

To maximize the benefits of houseplants in cleaning indoor air, it is generally recommended to use one plant for every 100 square feet of indoor space. Besides those plants mentioned above, other good indoor air cleaners include palms, ferns, dracaenas, corn plants, weeping figs, dumb canes, orchids, arrowheads, dwarf bananas and Chinese evergreens.

Stewardship

Have shoebox full of clippings, will travel

Lisa M. Petsche

While some families like to travel to distance places – the east or west coast, or south of the border – during school breaks, ours typically, happily stays put, taking advantage of some of the many attractions our region has to offer.

This continues the tradition started by my parents when my sisters and I were growing up. You see, our family of six had daytripping down to a fine art.

My parents were strong believers in blooming where you were planted, recreationally speaking. Since there were so many things to do within our geographic area and a relatively short distance beyond, they figured, Why not experience all there was to see and do within southern Ontario before considering treks to other provinces or countries? It made economical sense, too.

And so on weekends as well as March break and summer holidays, we drove to such places as Westfield Pioneer Village in Rockton, Fort George in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Martyrs' Shrine and Ste. Marie among the Hurons in Midland, and Storybook Gardens in London. In warm weather our destinations also included a wide variety of conservation areas and provincial parks where we swam and hiked and picnicked.

We would take one longer vacation for a week or two each year, renting a housekeeping cottage in Haliburton or Muskoka. A few days would always be devoted to daytripping in the surrounding area. That's how we discovered Bellevue House (Sir John A. Macdonald's home) and Old Fort Henry in Kingston, Santa's Village in Bracebridge and the Dorset Fire Tower, among other places.

Even though there were no mini vans then, we managed quite well in our four-door sedan with three of us in front and three in back. My sisters and I brought along travel bingo, notebooks and sketchpads, and the occasional paperback novel. (I also once crocheted an afghan over the course of a summer's travels.) Sometimes we would tell jokes and riddles, or sing together in three-part harmony.

Because Mom is an organized person who believes in making lists, there was always a supply of snacks on hand and a well-stocked picnic cooler in the trunk, along with a variety of outdoor toys: balls, Frisbees, badminton sets and the like.

Looking back, I realize our family would have made a great advertisement for Ontario tourism. Mom and Dad were continually clipping articles and advertisements from the travel section of the newspaper. If a place sounded interesting and was within a two-hour drive (sometimes they stretched it a little further), it went on the destination list. They eventually filled a large shoebox with these clippings, along with tourist maps, booklets and brochures. (That bulging, green Foamtreads box – now an important if unofficial part of our family's history – is still in the same cupboard in my parents' den.)

Meanwhile, my sisters and I collected postcards from the various towns and attractions we visited. I mounted mine in a floral, fabric-covered, self-stick photo album which I still prize. (My kids enjoy looking at the Peterborough lift locks, the shrunken human head from the Ripley's Believe-it-or-Not Museum, and the other neat photos – as do I.) Paging through it as an adult, I'm amazed at all the ground our family covered without venturing a great distance from home or spending a lot of money.

True, unlike many of our friends and relatives, we never made the practically requisite family pilgrimage to Florida or Myrtle Beach. Not only did we not feel deprived, however, but as I recall, the subject of traveling farther afield did not even come up. We were too busy enjoying our mini-trips as we discovered Ontario bit by bit, taking scenic routes whenever possible.

(My sisters and I were incredulous whenever we learned that a peer – who might have been to Disney World more than once – had never been to nearby attractions like Niagara Falls or the Ontario Science Centre.)

As for my own family of five, we are relatively new to daytripping. I'm pleased to say, though, that our collection of maps, tourist guides, newspaper clippings and sightseeing brochures is growing steadily.

In fact, I'm on the lookout for a good shoebox.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three and a freelance writer specializing in family life

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

Earthkeeping

Once again I have asked my friend, Cindy Verbeek from "A Rocha Canada – Christians in Conservation" to write on this aspect of stewardship.

The sign above my sink says "Life is simple…eat, sleep, save the world." Fitting for social justice/environmental activist types – right? Wrong! It is not my responsibility, nor within my capability, to "save the world." That is the work of our Savior Jesus Christ. I have since put a strike through the "save the world" and replaced it with "trust and obey." It is my job to trust God for all my needs and obey his commands.

Trust

God has provided us with so much. The question is do we trust him to provide what we need today and not worry about tomorrow? What about what we want? In North American our houses are overflowing with "resources" that we put out on the curb each week – our garbage! The steward's challenge is to "do what we can with what we've got." It's about contentment.

It's about contentment. Most of us already have everything we "need" and most likely have the resources to get what we may want by being creative with what we have. We do not necessarily need to go out and purchase something else to meet a particular want. It's a change of attitude from, "Can I have that new toy?" To "What has God placed in our house that can meet that need or desire?"

I was proud of my six-year-old when he came to me and said, "Mom I want to be King Peter from Narnia. I need some cardboard and a milk jug." Later he was running around with a cardboard suit of armor and a milk jug mask and sword. It was a testimony to creativity and contentment.

In the context of a church community this could mean incorporating geothermal heat into the church building design as Meadowlands Fellowship CRC in Ancaster, Ontario has done. Or turning the property God has entrusted to you into a nature sanctuary or community garden.

Obey

Once we know what to do we must do it. "My commandment is this – to love one another just as I have loved you." (John 15:12). What does that have to do with environmental stewardship? Ask yourself these questions: Is drinking coffee that is grown in a way that displaces the poor and destroys God's creation showing love? Can we follow the command to feed the hungry and give water to the thirsty when the food is poisoned and the water is polluted? Do we show honor to the Creator by destroying his creation?

Nowhere in the Bible will you find "thou shalt not throw away tin cans." But you will find that creation is suffering because of our disobedience. God is calling us to avoid greed and covetousness but instead be content and trust in him for our daily food.

One last thought

The well-known 3 R's, reduce-reuse-recycle, are about reducing our impact on God's creation. I try to live by a fourth R: "Recyclogic." Every scrap of paper and piece of string is a gift from God and is not to be hoarded but to be used to its fullest potential. Before throwing it away ask yourself, "Can I use this again?" Or (even better), "Could I live without it next time?" Let's use some "Recyclogic!"

But more importantly let's trust God for our daily needs and obey his word to love each other in our daily choices.

Cindy Verbeek resides in Houston, BC with her husband Dennis and family. You may contact her or "A Rocha Canada" by calling 250-845-2222 or emailing: ckeeper@telus.net.

Stewardly Tips: 'Save the world':

- Next time you "need" something ask "What do I have that could take its place?" For example, make a handmade card or scrapbook page with only the paper you get in your mailbox.
- Don't buy that toy your child begs for, or that thing you think you want… see what you can find around the house to build or replace it. You'll have fun just being creative!

Readers: Share your Stewardly Tips so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Steward's Hands

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario
Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca

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Catholic Church in US booming due to Spanish immigrants

LOS ANGELES (Zenit.org) – As debate continues over immigration policy in the United States, a side effect of the large inflow of people is a sharp increase in the Catholic population. The size of that increase is evident in a study recently released by the California Catholic Conference.

By 2025, Catholics are expected to comprise around 36 per cent of California's population, up from the current 30 per cent. The percentage of Catholics nationwide is expected to be 23.7 per cent by 2025. The growth in California Catholics is fueled by the increasing Hispanic presence.

As of last year, 11.1 million of California's 36.6 million people were Catholic. By 2025, 16.7 million of the state's expected 45.9 million residents will be Catholic. Of those additional 5.6 million Catholics, 3.5 million will be the result of new births, and 2.1 million as a result of migration from other states and countries.

"We are truly blessed that the Catholic Church in California is vibrant and growing, but our future should not happen by accident," said Bishop Stephen Blaire of Stockton, the president of the California Catholic Conference.

Data laid out in the study make clear the task ahead for the Church. By 2025, 4.3 million new Catholics will be baptized, more than 3.1 million children will celebrate their first Communion and the average parish will have expanded by more than 1,800 families.

The boom in Latino immigrants nationwide means a tripling of their numbers in just 35 years. In 1990 there were 22 million. By 2025 their number could reach 66 million. The Census Bureau has projected that the total number of Americans will increase by 100 million between 1990 and 2025 – and 44 million of that rise will come from immigration.

Nationwide, Catholic dioceses reported 53.6 million members in 1990. That rose to 65.3 million by 2005 and could reach 82.7 million in 2025, if present trends continue. The projections in the study assume a conservative estimate that 60 per cent of the Hispanic immigrants will be in the Church.

Catholic Latinos will likely increase to 40 million in 2025, more than triple the 13 million in 1990. Total growth in the U.S. Catholic population will amount to 29 million by 2025. Virtually all of the growth (26 million) will be due to the Hispanic population. Proportionally, their share of the Catholic population will double, to 48 per cent, over the 35-year period.

Looking back in history, the study noted that in 1790 the Catholic population of 35,000 amounted to only 1.1 per cent of a total U.S. population of 3.2 million. A big increase took place in the 19th century. The number of Catholics increased from 195,000, or 2.5 per cent of the total population, in 1820 to 19.8 million, 18.6 per cent of the total, in 1920.

As immigration fell in the following decades, Catholics declined as a proportion of the population, from 18.6 per cent in 1920 to 15.1 per cent by 1950. In the postwar baby boom their share rose to 21.9 per cent of the population by 1960.

Turning to California, the study says that the state's total population increased to 36.6 million from 29.8 million in the 1990-2005 period. It could rise another 9.3 million by 2025.

The growth has taken place within the existing structures. The Catholic Church in California added a net total of only three additional parishes between 1990 and 2005. Since the number of Catholics increased by 3.8 million for the same period, membership in an average parish grew to 10,384 from 6,854. The study cited research indicating that Mass attendance has stabilized at about 33 per cent over the past five years (attendance was 43 per cent in 1990).

The higher number of faithful will put pressure on priests, whose number is in decline. From 1995 to 2004, the number of active diocesan priests in California dropped 202. At present patterns, their ranks could drop by additional 158 between 2004 and 2010.

The implications at the parish level were drawn out with examples from the Diocese of San Bernardino. An average parish now has 12,000 members, with about 4,600 registered households. If no new parishes are opened, the average parish in San Bernardino in 2025 would have 24,000 members, or about 9,200 households.

One of the challenges facing the Church is to ensure the Catholic faith is handed on to the new generations of immigrant families. A 2002 poll conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center found that younger generations are more likely than their immigrant parents to adopt non-Catholic religions or be agnostic, reported the *Contra Costa Times* on June 8. In the poll, 76 per cent of first-generation Latino immigrants identify themselves as Catholic. This dropped to 59 per cent of second-generation immigrants.

In an April 30 article the *Washington Post* commented that large numbers of Latino immigrants are leaving the Catholic Church for Pentecostalism. The trend is more marked in the second and third generation of immigrants. Thirty years ago, about 90 per cent of Latinos in the United States were Catholic. Today that number is about 70 per cent, said the *Post*.

The article cited opinions from researchers, who have found that Latinos have been drawn in by the aggressive proselytizing and practical help – such as getting jobs or providing money and food – that Pentecostal churches offer.

Percentage of Christians in Japan has been static for 450 years

Hisashi Yukimoto

Tokyo (ENI) – The Christian population in Japan has remained at around one per cent of the country's population since 1549, when Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier arrived, says a professor of the sociology of religion at Tokyo's Roman Catholic Sophia University.

"But the young generation no longer has a negative image of Christianity, which was once stigmatized as heretical or a religion of Japan's enemy [during the Second World War], as many of them are seeking Christian-style weddings," said Mark R. Mullins, author of the book *Christianity Made in Japan* that has sold thousands of copies in its Japanese version.

"The question is how the churches will change their exclusiveness and create a positive image," said Mullins speaking at a June 16 public lecture at Sophia University, a Jesuit institution.

Mullins, a member of the Anglican-Episcopal Church in Japan, had researched 13 indigenous Christian movements in Japan for about 10 years before the English original of the book was published in 1998. It was published last year in Japanese.

Considering whether the Christian population in Japan can go beyond one per cent of the current population of 127 million, Mullins pointed out that the major challenge for the churches is to change the "exclusiveness of the church organizations", which he said makes it difficult for Japanese to get involved.

"The attitude of the general Japanese public to religious organizations is the most severe now," he said. "Ever since the Aum [doomsday group's nerve gas attack] incident [in Tokyo's subway system] in 1995, all religious organizations [in Japan] are seen as dangerous. So, one of the problems for the churches is how they will change such a negative image of the church organizations."

Mullins, who studied in the United States and Canada, said: "Many young Japanese today study abroad, become Christians there in international and free environments, and come back to Japan. But they can't fit into the Japanese churches." He added: "So, it is a challenge for the churches to be an attractive community to the next generation."

He said he did not think Christianity in Japan was lacking, but it trails behind Buddhism. "Buddhism had already penetrated Japanese culture and society in various forms in the 1000 years of its history before Christianity came into Japan again in the late 19th century."

One hundred years later, Christianity in Japan is now catching up with Buddhism, he noted. "But the problem is whether there is a need for that among the next generation. The young people today don't feel very much that it is necessary."

The Rev. Nobuo Kaino, pastor of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), in response to Mullins' lecture cited Kenji Ishii, a Japanese scholar of religion at Kokugakuin University, saying that 85 per cent of all Japanese weddings are Christian-style.

"The young people have no hatred against Christianity anymore," said Kaino. "But the churches have no substance and methods to respond to them. This is the major problem."

Nunoike Catholic Church in Nagoya, Japan

Church in Jos, Nigeria faces constant threats

Obed Minchakpu

JOS, Nigeria (Compass Direct) – For the Gangare area congregation of the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) in this central Nigerian city, the first Saturday in June brought yet another difficult day of fending off Muslim opposition.

Church members were trying to erect a protective fence around the church when a large number of Muslims stormed the facility on June 3 and forcibly halted the work.

"We were digging a trench round the property when the Muslims in large number rushed onto the premises of the church and warned that unless we stopped the erection of the fence, they would deal with us and burn down the church," church elder Dauda Mshelia told Compass.

Previously Muslims had built a house on part of the land belonging to the church. The Christians took them to court, which ruled in favor of the church.

"To avoid a situation that will ignite a conflict between us and the Muslims, we had to stop the work," Mshelia added. "Even now, there are plans by the Muslims to attack us any time we are in the church and to burn the sanctuary – that is why you see the police keeping watch over the church."

Following the confrontation, government officials from the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Town Planning went to the church on the June 9 to meet with both Muslim and Christian leaders. The officials explained that the property in question belonged to the church.

According to church elders, the Muslims who overran the church premises removed beacons set up by government officials marking the church's land.

Three Muslim men lay claim to the property but they have not been able to prove that they own it. They have refused to abide by Jos High Court Three's judgment in favor of the church.

Police and Plateau state officials have stepped in, but tension remains high. There are fears that if this issue is not resolved, it might ignite fresh religious hostilities in the state.

Not intimidated

Church members are well acquainted with fierce opposition; Muslims destroyed the original church building after conflict erupted into widespread violence in 2001.

"Muslims have dominated this area of Jos city called Gangare," said the ECWA church's immediate past pastor, the Rev. Sani Damisa. "Christians here were attacked, their houses destroyed, and all the churches forced to relocate to other parts of Jos city, with the exception of our church. ECWA Church, Gangare is the only Christian church in this area of Jos."

The outbreak of violence dispersed the 280 members of the church; the newly constituted church has just 120. The church relocated to a new site 500 meters away after the first one was destroyed, but even in the new building, members daily face Muslim extremists throwing stones at them as they worship in the sanctuary.

Rev. Damisa said the church has remained in Gangare only because members do not want to give in to intimidation and suppression.

"Every time we are in the church, Muslims throw stones at us," he said. "Sometimes they deface the church walls and doors with excrement."

In past years Muslim extremists have stripped the church of doors and windows and corrugated iron sheets from the roof; many other church items have been taken and not recovered.

Holding programs in the church at night is out of the question, he said – the Muslims would definitely attack. The church has reported the harassment to police authorities and the government of Plateau state, but none of the attackers have been charged.

While many of the original members of the Gangare church were dispersed or killed in 2001, Rev. Damisa noted that the new families constituting the congregation have resolved never to give in to persecution.

"The strategy of the Muslims is that if they attack us and we flee, they then appropriate our land and homes as spoils of war and then consolidate their hold on the area, and then move on to attack us again in the new area we have moved to," he said. "In this way, they gain ground by spreading the tentacles of Islam. We do not think it is wise for Christians to take to their heels any time they are attacked by Muslims. How can we run away from the land the Lord has given us?"

Mugabe warns church critics of 'vicious' response

Harare cityscape

Harare (ENI) – Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe has joined in prayers for divine intervention to turn around his country's devastated economy where he also warned clerics against meddling in politics saying they faced a "vicious" response from his government.

"We cannot do without each other as the church and state," Mugabe said in a speech to thousands of people gathered at a stadium outside Harare on June 25 for a national day of prayer.

"Let the church come in and point out where there are shortcomings, sins of commission or omission," said Mugabe, while also launching what was seen as an attack on Roman Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube, one of the Zimbabwean president's most strident opponents.

"The bishop is not dearer to God than the president," said Mugabe. "When the church leaders start being political, we regard them as political creatures and we are vicious in that area."

The day of prayer divided churches in Zimbabwe with Ncube reported to have called a boycott, saying that praying with Mugabe was a betrayal of those who were suffering because of his policies.

In recent weeks, Mugabe has urged closer co-operation between the church and state to resolve the problems affecting the country, while also castigating clerics critical of his rule.

Ncube had rebuked church leaders who held talks with Mugabe in May in what was presented as an attempt to find solutions to Zimbabwe's political and economic crisis.

"The reason why you see some church leaders singing the government's praises is because they have already been bought," Ncube was quoted as saying by the independent *Standard* newspaper after the delegation of 12 church leaders drawn mainly from the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) met Mugabe on May 25.

"Some of our church leaders have been given farms and money by the ruling party and government to campaign for them," Ncube said.

ZCC president Bishop Peter Nemapare and general secretary Densen Mafinyani praised Mugabe for granting them an audience.

Zimbabwe is facing an economic crisis with inflation above 1,000 per cent and the majority of the population is living in extreme poverty.

Mafinyani told Ecumenical News International the church leaders were entering into dialogue with Mugabe because he was the person in charge.

"Whether he stole votes in previous elections as widely stated is immaterial," Mafinyani said. "We have been meeting him because he is the man in charge at the moment."

Jesus doesn't advocate perfectionist love

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS) – American Baptists, in their General Board meeting in late June, heard a call for "radical discipleship" based on a contemporary reading of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus was not advocating "some kind of perfectionist love," said Dr. Glen H. Stassen, a California professor of Christian ethics and a life-long American Baptist. Instead he taught "regular practices" to deal with anger, greed, conflict, and other human behaviors. The command, "Be ye perfect," really means "be complete in your love, to all kinds of folks," Stassen said.

Stassen teaches Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, and is the author of *Living the Sermon on the Mount* and *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in a Contemporary Context.*

Speaking to leaders of a denomination that has had to deal recently with divisive issues, Stassen said people on both sides of controversies often have a clear solution to them – those on the other side should repent. But, he said, "We've got to repent, all of us. We've all got to learn to be a little more humble."

Stassen suggested there is a three-part plan behind the Sermon on the Mount, rather than simply an antithesis of two positions – evil and perfection. Using anger as an example, he observed that Jesus states an evil, diagnoses the vicious circle involved, and only then gives orders about what to do.

"Jesus never commands us not to be angry – it's about when you're angry, what do you do about it," he said.

In a question session, he was asked what he would like to see as the theme of the church's biennial meeting next year. He suggested "a focus of following Jesus in peacemaking." And when another questioner asked whether he was giving enough weight to idealism, he replied that he was not so much interested in people striving toward impossibly high ideals as in seeking "God's gracious deliverance."

A woman of courage

Harry Antonides

...if Europe is no longer big enough for Ali, we are all in trouble. It is sad that the home of the Enlightenment can no longer cope with her right to free speech.

Jasper Gerard,
The Sunday Times,
June 4, 2006

In a very short time Ayaan Hirsi Ali rose from being a penniless refugee to becoming a prominent Dutch politician, a popular talk-show guest, designated by *Time* magazine in 2005 as one of the 100 Most Influential Persons of the World. But then the tide turned against her.

Reading the fast-paced story of her life reveals a woman motivated by raw courage and an indomitable spirit. What makes that story of compelling interest is her decision to take a very public stand against the murderous fanatics who want to rule in the name of Allah.

Here is a synopsis of her roller-coaster ride from obscurity to fame and threats on her life that forced her to go into hiding, then to dishonour, resignation from Parliament, the possible loss of her Dutch citizenship, and her decision to emigrate to the United States.

Escaping Tyranny

Ayaan Hirsi Ali was born in 1969 into a family then living in Somalia, as Ayaan Hirsi Magan. Her father, who had studied in the West, was a devout Muslim and a pro-democratic guerilla leader against the Marxist dictatorship of Mohammed Siyad Barre.

Though her father was opposed to the practice of female genital mutilation, while he was away from home, her grandmother performed that traumatic procedure on Ali when she was five years old. In 1975, the family fled to Saudi Arabia, from there to Ethiopia, and then spent ten years in Kenya.

Ali decided to defy her father's choice in an arranged marriage. In her own words: "I came to Holland in the summer of 1992 because I wanted to be able to determine my own future. I didn't want to be forced into a destiny that other people had chosen for me, so I opted for the protection of the rule of law. Here in Holland, I found freedom and opportunities, and I took those opportunities to speak out against religious terror."

At first she found employment in manual labour, while quickly learning the Dutch language, which she now speaks fluently. In 1995 she enrolled at the University of Leiden, where she studied political science, graduating in 2000. She found work as a translator and interpreter, first with the Labour Party, later with the Liberal Party (VVD).

After 9/11, Ali renounced her Muslim faith and began her career as a stinging critic of radical Islam, particularly its view of women. In 2002, she published *The Son Factory* (De *Zoontjesfabriek*). She attracted the attention of the public and the anger of radical Muslims, who began to issue death threats because she had become an "apostate." She was then placed under full-time police protection.

In January 2003, Ali was elected to the Dutch Parliament as a member of the VVD. She continued to speak out publicly against facets of Islamic culture, which resulted in charges against her, but the court dismissed those charges. On November 2, 2004, Mohammed Bouyeri murdered Theo Van Gogh, who had cooperated with Ali in producing the film *Submission*, a graphic exposure of Muslim abuse of women. The killer had pinned a warning on the dead body that she would be next.

This murder in broad daylight on an Amsterdam street, for the second time in two years confronted the tolerant and easy-going Dutch with a crime they found difficult to grasp. At first Ali went into hiding and spent some time in the U.S. But in January 2005, she returned to Parliament, though ever since she has been living under 24-hour bodyguard protection.

Despite the many death threats, Ali has continued to speak and write forcefully against radical Islam and against those who are cowed into silence or into soft-peddling the real threat to Western democracy and freedom. But her determination to speak the truth about radical Islam did not sit well with many among the Dutch political and media elite. They have begun to distance themselves and some have turned against her for what they believe amounts to needlessly antagonizing the Muslim community by her provocative style.

Two recent events have conspired to make her life as a member of the Dutch Parliament impossible.

The first incident resulted from the fact that she was living under continuous bodyguard protection. She had been moved from one safe house to another until she found something more permanent. That ended when her neighbors objected to her presence because they felt that this put them in danger. They asked for and received a court order demanding that Ali vacate her apartment. She explained to an interviewer that she found her neighbors' callous attitude toward her shocking and the most important factor in her decision to leave Holland.

The second incident was a television program aired on May 11 in which she was accused of lying in her 1992 application for asylum in the Netherlands. She indeed had not told the truth about her name and country of origin in order not to leave a trail for her family to find her and to have a better chance of success in her asylum application.

However, she had on several previous occasions publicly admitted her dishonesty, even as she ran for a seat in Parliament in 2002. At the time these indiscretions were not considered to be a problem. But the situation changed when influential Dutch circles began to see her as a troublemaker and loudmouth who provoked the ire of radical Muslims. The one-time darling of the public had become a liability.

Betrayal

Very quickly things continued to unravel for Ali. The minister of immigration, Rita Verdonk, investigated the charges mentioned in the television program and declared that Ali had no right to her Dutch citizenship. Although the minister ran into a storm of protest in Parliament the next day and she has since qualified her statement, the situation for Ali had become untenable. On May 16, she announced her resignation in a public statement in which she defended herself and again warned against an attitude of appeasement over against militant Islam.

And so a promising career in Dutch politics has come crashing to the ground.

What must have been most painful for Ali were the nasty comments of her political colleagues, even from members of her own party (VVD). Former VVD minister Hans Wiegel said that Ali is a brave woman but her opinions are polarizing. In other words, she is upsetting the multicultural applecart in Holland. He also predicted

Ayaan Hirsi Ali

that Ali's leaving "would not be a loss to the VVD and to the Tweede Kamer.... We will not be hearing much from Ayaan any more, and we will not miss her."

Politician Hilbrand Nawijn boasted about his success in depriving Ali of her Dutch citizenship. Nasr Joemman, representing the Contact Organization for Muslims and Government, announced: "I celebrate that she is leaving the Netherlands. I hope that by her departure we can move forward with building a harmonious society."

Although Ali announced that she is leaving Holland, the issues she has raised, particularly the future of Islam in the West and the subjugation of women in Islamic culture, will not disappear.

She stated that she will continue to ask uncomfortable questions that will elicit resistance because she feels obligated to help others to live in freedom as others have helped her. Without a trace of self-pity, she explained that she has gone through a sometimes painful process of personal growth in telling the truth about and to herself. But she is unbowed in her determination to continue to speak out in defence of a free and open society:

Only clear thinking and strong action can lead to real change, and free many people within our society from the mental cage of submission. The idea that I can contribute to their freedom, whether in the Netherlands or in another country, gives me deep satisfaction.... I regret that I will be leaving the Netherlands, the country which has given me so many opportunities and enriched my life, but I am glad that I will be able to continue my work. I will go on.

Ali is quick to point out that though she is sad about leaving Holland, she does not confuse the Dutch people with the Dutch media. She told an interviewer: "The press creates the impression that the whole country is against you. But this is not the case.... I love the country. Without Holland, I would not have become what I am"

A new home

It has been said that Holland's loss is America's gain. But it is also true, as Christopher Hitchens has pointed out, that the Washington-based American Enterprise Institute, which she will join in September, is not the place where she is most needed. On the contrary: "In Holland, every day, extremist imams preach intolerance and cruelty, and, when they are criticized, invoke the help of foreign embassies to bring pressure on the Dutch authorities. They face no risk of expulsion."

In a welcoming letter from the AEI president, Christopher DeMuth assured her that she will be able to make important contributions to the work of the Institute

Continued on page 15...

America through the eyes of a Dutch visitor

During the last semester Calvin Seminary invited a Dutch professor to teach a course in preaching. While in Grand Rapids he wrote a periodic blog for a Dutch newspaper, Nederlands Dagblad, *sharing some of his observations on life in America. I though them interesting enough to share with* CC *readers. After returning to The Netherlands,* **Rev. Ron van der Spoel** *has promised to send* CC *occasional reports on church life in "the old country."*

– Editor

April 26, 2006

Big hearted

Here we are – in the American city of Grand Rapids in the state of Michigan. My three month sabbatical has begun. In planning this, over a year ago, it turned out that our American friend, Herman De Vries, professor of Dutch and German at well-known Calvin College, would be taking a sabbatical leave at the same time. It wasn't long before plans were in place to do a house exchange: he and his family over to Harderwijk, and we over to Grand Rapids. I'll be studying here for a while at Calvin Seminary – specifically at the Center for Excellence in Preaching which is associated with the seminary. A splendid opportunity, especially since we can be here as a whole family.

The first impressions of this country are overwhelming. Everything is so big and spacious. Big cars, wide streets, large stomachs, and enormous stores with four-liter milk containers and jars of peanut butter that weigh a kilo and a half. Calvin College, for example, built on a former golf course, is so big that you need a bike or car to get from one end to the other. There is so much room! Everyone – rich and poor, it seems – lives in a single family home with a big yard.

You'd think that all this space for oneself might make the people very individualistic – everyone out for himself in his own private kingdom. But we've noticed that nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, it's the other way around.

Where the distance between people is so great, there grows a need for closeness. Family members here often live hundreds of miles away, so other connections become very important – you look for a community to belong to. Neighbors, for example, are very important in the sense that because of all this space, you're dependent on one another. The day after we arrived in our house neighbors came by one after the other to introduce themselves, to ask how we were doing, to ask if we needed anything – and they even brought over homemade cookies as a welcome gift.

And then there is the church. For Christians here that's the most important community that they belong to. A church – or small group, a Bible study, or a youth group – becomes like a family and through it you become a family member in the congregation. Most churches are not very big. People know each other, and they are there for one another – not only on Sunday, but also throughout the week....

May 3, 2006

Dutch American

...I've been in Grand Rapids for about two weeks now and wherever I go I am able to exchange a few words in Dutch with most of the people I meet. Let me tell you what it's like.

I'm walking down a hallway of the Calvin Seminary, after a fascinating conversation with Dr. Henri de Moor, one of the professors at the seminary. We talked not only about preacher education at Calvin and in Europe but we also shared our experiences about being a dominee in the Veluwe region. He, sometime ago, in Doornspijk, and I in Harderwijk. This former preacher colleague is now a respected professor and scholar in Reformed America.

Still savoring the conversation, I walk down the hall and see a name plate "Professor Tuit" on an open door. Tuit, I think – can't go wrong there. I knock and startle the man behind his computer screen who turns a friendly face toward me. "Good Afternoon, Mr. Tuit," I try in Dutch. He immediately jumps up, invites me in, and starts talking nonstop in a Dutch marked with an unmistakable Schevening accent.

The same afternoon I show up at the main office of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and start talking in English with the director of European Relations. Before I know it someone is standing at the door who says – in my mother tongue – "Excuse me, let me shake your hand. I hear a Dutch brogue."

Sometimes the Dutch are the immigrants themselves – more often, though, they are the children or grandchildren who where born here. They call this part of Michigan Dutch America, after all, and when you page through the telephone book, you could just as well be looking at one from Groningen, Leeuwarden, or Amersfoort. Our ethnic counterparts have Dutch names, Dutch words, and look as Dutch as can be. Part of the explanation for this is that about 70 per cent of the Dutch people marry each other, thanks to the Reformed schools and Calvin College.

There is something special about these Dutch Americans. The more people I meet the more I begin to understand what that special thing is. It started dawning on me after a conversation with Mr. Witte, a lively man in his mid-eighties who invited us over for coffee after church and told us his story. He was invited by the Christian Reformed Church to emigrate to the US. The Christian Reformed Church did that often to strengthen their memberships.

The church arranged for a house and for work in a factory. It supported good schools and provided pastoral care. So Mr. Witte and his wife departed, with their seven children, for Grand Rapids. Like all the immigrants here he worked long and hard. He himself built up a large travel agency that is now run by his sons. He describes a combination of hard work and adventure, with all the while the security of a spiritual family around you.

Thanks to the familiarity of the church and the Christian schools, which function still today like a close family, the Dutch immigrants could integrate into and fully function within American society. At the same time, they had a natural network at their disposal that appeared to be invaluable. The Dutch Americans – specifically the members of the Christian Reformed Church – can count on the support of others, and therefore they dare to go out on a limb. They dare to be entrepreneurs. In this part of America they have a large presence – in church matters, in scholarship, in politics and in the economic realm. They are completely American, but because of their bond they maintain an indefinable, yet unmistakably genuine Dutch character....

May 10, 2006

Are you coming to church on Sunday?

We've gotten used to it by now, but the first few times we wondered what was going on. Here in Grand Rapids it seems like whenever you meet someone they start talking about their church. The neighbor who comes over to introduce herself, the cashier at the mega-store, the students at Calvin Seminary – they all ask where you go to church. No, not whether you go to church, but where.

They automatically assume that you're Christian. That's not so strange in this country where almost 85 per cent of the population are active Christians. So it's more important to know where you go to church than to know where you work. People's question about your church is invariably followed by an invitation to go with them to their church on Sunday....

We've been attending First Christian Reformed Church which is also one of these close-knit congregations. Once you begin experiencing church life here you automatically start asking yourself what the similarities and differences are between these churches and our Dutch churches (in our Reformed tradition).

To be honest, I see mostly similarities. The way people interact with each other is just like in a vibrant church congregation in the Netherlands. People know each other and support each other in joy and suffering. They come together to worship God and to be edified, and afterward they get together for coffee and conversation. If there are visitors at church, it goes without saying that people introduce themselves to the newcomers. A small gesture, but one with big rewards: guests know that they're welcome in your midst.

And of course there are also differences between the church here and in the Netherlands. There is more room in the liturgy than I'm used to in my Reformed tradition. Members here participate by playing music and singing in the music groups or choirs that most churches have. Young people do the scripture readings. People have opportunity to come forward to express joys or concerns before the congregational prayer. It's all somewhat more dynamic than in the Netherlands.

And there is one more notable difference as we discovered this past Sunday. It was a service in which a girl from the congregation made public profession of faith. It took place during an ordinary service, just before the sermon – complete with her response, "I do, God helping me" and, in turn, the promise of the congregation to welcome here into full communion. The girl, Autumn, was just twelve years old! In recent years, children who express their love for Jesus Christ have been allowed to make public profession of faith. To prepare for that, they are assigned a mentor – usually a Christian in her or his twenties – who spends time with the girl or boy for a few months. They talk a lot about God, about faith, and about being a Christian, and in this way the young congregant is prepared for public profession and for celebration of the Lord's Supper.

After her profession, young, delicate Autumn offered a witness. A small girl standing there on a big stage. The piano began playing a song about Jesus' death and resurrection, and she performed a very controlled yet expressive dance. And everyone experienced how she was honoring God and what he has done for her. It touched me deeply, and when we came home I thought: I'm going to invite my neighbor to church on Sunday.

May 17, 2006

Thanks!

At first I thought it was just a polite nicety. But the longer we're here, the more I'm discovering that people really mean it when they say thank you. People say thanks to you often and sincerely. Last week at Calvin Theological Seminary I gave a lecture on mission-oriented preaching. Since that morning I've been stopped on campus almost daily by students who take the time to thank me for my words. And that does me good.

Thanking each other is an important aspect of the culture here – a genuine thank-you culture. People like to compliment each other and that happens a lot. And they also know here how to receive a compliment. If you say to someone that you like their house, they show real gratitude for your saying so. If you tell a minister that you appreciated the sermon, he gives you a grateful look and says, "Really? Well, thank you!"

Are they overdoing it? We sober Dutch folk might think so, but

Continued on page 19...

Where are the women?

JoMae Spoelhof

The headline at the CRC's online news page for Synod 2006 reads: **"Synod Votes to Remove 'Male' As Qualification for Office."** The story begins as follows: "June 15, 2006, Grand Rapids, Mich. – Synod 2006 took another step toward making all ordained offices in the Christian Reformed Church available to women, but with hesitation. Synod voted to remove the word "male" from the qualifications for ecclesiastical office listed in the Church Order, opening the way for women to be ordained as ministers of the Word, elders or ministry associates. But the decision needs to be adopted by Synod 2007 before it takes effect."

It goes on to mention the stipulations binding the decision, "Synod also imposed provisions that women ministers or elders would not be permitted to serve as delegates to synod or as synodical deputies." Stunning as this information is, it fails to reveal the Gordian knot by which the favorable news for women (deleting the word male) is married to the negative (no female delegates or deputies.) The trick is, the two rulings are intricately woven together with the words "*provided that*." The recommendation reads in part, "that the word male be deleted ... provided that ... women ministers and elders not be allowed to serve...."

Good news is cancelled out

The online report ends with synod asking for seven years of silence on the subject. "Finally, synod encouraged the church to "undertake a Sabbath rest of seven years following the adoption of these changes ... before revisiting this action in the assemblies." So the headline, which at first glance appears to be good news, is quickly cancelled out by the rest of the story.

Prior to Synod's discussion of women, I was familiar with the requests of Overture 5 – that the word male be deleted from Church Order Article 3a and that delegation of women office bearers to synod be permitted. I had also read the Board of Trustee's advice for clear leadership, as printed in the supplement to the Agenda for Synod. It concludes: "The Board sees no benefit in synod's responding ambivalently to the proposed change and advises synod to speak clearly for the change."

I had the report of Advisory Committee 8B at hand in preparation for the debate. So the evening of Thursday, June 15, found me glued to the video webcast on my computer screen. I watched as delegates listened to passionate testimony about how a spirit of unity had pervaded the committee as they prayed for guidance and worked to form a single recommendation rather than a majority/minority report. A dramatic plea spoke of the Holy Spirit's role in the compromise they arrived at and urgently encouraged unanimous approval of it. It was a powerful introduction to their work. Watching, I almost felt that a vote against, would be a vote against the work of the Holy Spirit. Almost. Because the recommendations in front of me just didn't make sense.

Men speak eloquently against exclusion

At 8 p.m., only an hour after the report had been introduced, and after only about ten speakers (all, I believe, spoke in favor,) the question was called and my heart sank. Strong objections emerged immediately, however, and men who had held back out of respect for the climate of unity which had been presented, now began to speak eloquently against the demeaning exclusion of ordained women to full participation in their office. Arguments from both sides flew back and forth. I heard biblical references such as Jacob waiting seven years for Rachel! (Did he wait seven years to exercise his rights?) I was appalled. Even the notion of a seven year sabbath rest was confusing. Is a "sabbath rest" seven years long? I continued to watch and listen in dismay and disbelief until the vote was taken about three hours later and the recommendations of the advisory committee, though some were modified, basically passed.

The first recommendation was approved 112 - 67 with one abstention. The word male will be deleted from Church Order Article 3a, but at a great price. Last year's provision for female synodical deputies will be withdrawn and women will not be permitted as voting delegates at synod. Two grounds are given for this. The first speaks of "honoring and respecting on the synodical level those who oppose women serving in the offices of minister or elder." It does not mention that this "honoring and respecting" is at the expense of dishonoring and disrespecting those who advocate women serving in these offices.

The second ground points out that both perspectives as to whether or not women are allowed to serve as minister and elders are "within the bounds of biblical authority and Reformed theology." Both the removal of the word male from Church Order 3a and the retention of an all male synod are based on this declaration. How can this be defended? How can one be prevented from serving on the synodical level when her ordination is "within the bounds of biblical and Reformed theology?"

A huge step back

The reversal of last year's acceptance of female synodical delegates is a huge step back for women ordained in the CRC. Considering the restrictions imposed, have women gained anything by the vote to remove the word male from Church Order 3a? Will this change force classes to accept women? Or congregations to elect us? It is hard to see any progress in this decision.

The rest of the recommendations of Advisory Committee 8B sought to nail the details of the above changes firmly into the Church Order where if ratified they would be very difficult to change. One small hopeful note concerning this is that some of these, such as #3: "No classis shall delegate a woman minister or elder to synod," and #4: "No woman shall be nominated by a classis (or appointed by synod) as a synodical deputy," were amended to be placed in the supplement to the Church Order rather than in the Church Order itself. The significance is that the supplement can be modified more easily.

PHOTO BY LORI NIEDENFUER COOL. COPYRIGHT 2006 THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Ordained ministers, from left, Thea Leunk, Amanda Bakale and Heidi DeJonge listen to debate about women's role in the Christian Reformed Church during the Synod at Calvin College.

The effort to strong-arm our women to stay on the sidelines and the extent to which it was successful, leaves me discouraged and angry. The request in recommendation #7 for a seven year hiatus on the subject represents one more painful twist in this power play.

How will women respond?

Now the question is, what will Synod 2007 do? Will they ratify the deletion of the word male from the Church Order? Will they remove these 2006 changes to the supplement? Will they overturn the encouragement of a seven year silence? Perhaps the larger question is, how will our women respond? Will we be willing to send a loud and clear message as to female leadership abilities and our power to insist on change?

Synod declared these recommendations to be its response to Overture 5. What will be the response of the women of the Christian Reformed Church? At Synod some women spoke in favor of these limitations. Is that the belief of the majority of our women? Perhaps this is the time for more CRC women to become active leaders in our denomination. To take a stand and raise our voices on our own behalf. Without asking permission. Without waiting to be told we are allowed.

Challenging all women

I'd like to challenge the women who care about this issue to each choose at least one expression of their determination for change. Whether that is monitoring her classis, writing letters to the Board of Trustees and/or the Banner, *finding other directions for some of our tithing during Synod's "sabbath rest" or taking a sabbatical of our own from some of our congregational involvement.*

Women do have power. As Christians, we are hesitant to use that power. It would rock the boat. It might hurt our families. It would hurt our congregations to lose teachers, to lose committee chairs, or to lose financial support. We don't want to seem pushy by sticking our nose into the business of a classis where we are not wanted. Yet if each woman used her power in some small way, to make Synod recognize, value and utilize the untapped wisdom of the female half of our denomination, this would be a valuable gift to the Christian Reformed Church.

The majority of Synod just doesn't get it! We are wasting resources. We are wasting wisdom by not embracing the leadership potential of our sisters in Christ. This is folly. Women do a huge amount of the work in our churches. We have illustrated our gifts of leadership in countless ways. When our women hear of this latest insult to our integrity and capability to govern our denomination along with our brothers, I hope many will speak out.

Hope

Hope means to keep living
amid desperation
and to keep humming
in the darkness.
Hoping is knowing that there is love.
it is trust in tomorrow
it is falling asleep
and waking again
when the sun rises.
In the midst of a gale at sea.
it is to discover land.
In the eyes of another
it is to see that you are understood....

As long as there is still hope
There will also be prayer....

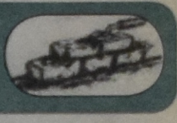
And you will be held
in God's hands.

By Henry Nouwen

An open letter to delegates of Synod 2006:

We will no longer sit in the back of the bus!

BuildingTrust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.



On June 15, 2006, Synod voted to remove the word "male" from the qualifications for ecclesiastical office listed in the Church Order, opening the way for women to be ordained as ministers of the Word, elders or ministry associates. But the decision needs to be adopted by Synod 2007 before it takes effect.

Synod also imposed provisions that women ministers or elders would not be permitted to serve as delegates to synod or as synodical deputies.

Finally, synod encouraged the church to "undertake a Sabbath rest of seven years following the adoption of these changes…before revisiting this action in the assemblies."

Synod's advisory committee told delegates that the recommendation is a compromise and will enable the church to remain united, despite deeply-felt differences on the women-in-office issue. (CRC – Synod website)

I trusted you. I trusted you for a long time to do what is right. And I especially trusted you Thursday evening, June 15, 2006, when you had to vote on the women's role in the church. I also trusted the process of passion, patience and peace.

This *Building Trust* column helps build this trust. Every month issues are covered that bring us closer to a greater understanding of the struggles of women around the world. No matter where inequality falls on a continuum, it is about the oppression of women. Soon, however, we will stand side by side on the Synod floor – a symbol of all that is good and right with our church.

But I feel betrayed. I feel betrayed because you again relegated us to the back of the bus. I feel betrayed by your lack of courage. I feel betrayed because you do not *know* what it is like to be a commodity that is used and abused around the world since the beginning of time. I feel betrayed because you do not take to *heart* the stories in this column, as well as the recent beatings of Iranian women because they demanded rights of their own, the powerlessness of rental of wives in India or the abandoned female babies in China. If you had, you would have voted differently. And while you will indignantly protest you do not condone such activity, you have unwittingly colluded with this crime by keeping women out of Synod because the *principle* is the same: *Women are oppressed when they are not valued and forced to live by the rules of men.*

To make matters worse you rationalize your choice to be for the sake of unity. I understand this. You try to be peacemakers, however, what kind of peace or unity is this?

On the eve of the World Peace Forum recently held in Vancouver, Rex Weyler of The *Vancouver Sun*, writes that peacemakers differentiate between how *doves, hawks and owls* work towards peace. Doves tend to believe provocation causes more conflict, so they appease others not realizing the weakness of their simplistic stance. Hawks, on the other hand, believe in showing their strength to produce peace not realizing it can also incite provocation in their neighbor. Owls, according to Graham Allison, former dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, are rational peacemakers, they try to design stability to create conditions for peace, not realizing in times of crisis theoretical controls may not work.

I wonder, about your process towards peace or unity. Are you doves, hawks or owls? Did you choose to appease? Or did you try to design a sense of stability? And when you put restrictions on the role of women as well as advise a seven-year sabbatical on further discussion – was that a show of strength? All three ways of working towards peace and unity gives us insights on peacemaking, yet, they also share a basic blind spot.

By managing the process this way you overlooked the spiritual roots of peace and unity – which is the soul of the person and consequently, the soul of the community. In other words, it is about who we are as people and how we deal with the *heart* of the oppression of women. You see, in spite of our so-called unity we must struggle with the roots of the conflict. All conflicts are about *personal desires, fears and lack of knowledge* – whether we want to admit it or not. Your reactions to these three aspects of the conflict in regards to the role of women influenced your thoughts and behaviors leaving us with your oppressive restrictions! I cannot help but wonder what may be going on here.

You expressed sentiments for taking a sabbath's rest from the yearly discussions in regards to this issue. And then you have sentiments about not wanting to be forced to share the Synodical floor with women. Furthermore, it seems you need more time to get used to the changes taking place. This is undeniably the talk of *free* men. Most women in the world do not get breathing space from the demands men place on them. They are repeatedly forced to live in highly discriminatory situations. Consequently, they find resources deep within themselves to keep their heads above water. *This is also what you must do if the equality of women does not sit well with you.*

I understand there are two sides to the issue. Some of you talk passionately in terms of social justice. This is also my view. There are no restrictions on male or female, we are all human beings interdependently connected to serve God throughout God's kingdom. Then, there are those of you who claim God gave you the authority to rule over women. If this is what you believe I urge you to exercise this responsibility more creatively than you have thus far. Since you have the responsibility of authority you have the power to choose how to exercise this authority. Therefore, I urge you to set your mothers, your sisters, your wives and your daughters *free* so that they can be responsible for their *own* lives. Did God not do the same when God decided to let us roam freely throughout the four corners of this earth?

Many decades ago Mohandas Gandhi offered the world a new recipe for using peace to fight injustice and oppression. One ingredient was not to co-operate with that which is inherently wrong. This is where I am today in my relationship to the church I love.

Most of my adult life (over 30 years!) many women and men challenged Synod on a consistent basis to deal with the inequality of women in our church. To them I am deeply grateful. This year you as delegates voted to remove the word "male" from the qualifications for ecclesiastical office. This paved the way for allowing the final step towards women's equality – representation on the Synod floor – to be a *natural evolution* of justice, full of wonder and respect for those on both sides of the issue who worked hard to overcome the barriers and obstacles that have been so much part of this struggle. *Yet, it was not to be – again!* But, if that was not enough, you then decided to add insult to injury by stipulating a *seven-year* sabbatical before revisiting the issue!

I feel nothing but sadness now. For most women the struggle for equality is not *only* about what happens in our denomination. We live in a global village and what happens to my sisters on the other side of the planet as a result of gender discrimination deeply disturbs me. Your decision against the equality of women in the church is again a reflection as well as a reminder of how deeply ingrained discrimination against women is, as well how prevalent it continues to be in the name of God.

And so, for me to continue to be part of the church I love, I will no longer co-operate with the governing body of our denomination. Consequently, I will withdraw my support from the church in various ways, in discussion with the pastors and members of church council, all of whom I love and respect. Furthermore, I will *not* co-operate with the recommended hiatus on the discussion concerning the equality of women.

At the same time, I am hoping that all those who feel as troubled as I do about the decisions you made at Synod, will find their own way to protest this unhappy turn of events. Unity at the expense of justice undermines the heart and soul of all of us because none of us, male or female should be *forced* to sit in the back of the bus!

May God be with us all.

Arlene Van Hove
Langley, BC

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via e-mail at: vickyv@telus.net

The two-pronged decision by Synod with respect to women's participation in the CRC

Like many Christian Reformed Church women and men I hoped that this year's Synod would decide to lay the *women in office* issue to rest by voting a clear *yes* to allowing women full participation in the ministry and governance of the church. It grieves me to have to accept that a substantial number of my brothers in Christ still equate the body of Christ with a patriarchal system first and foremost; that somehow having women participate fully, according to gifts received from the Holy Spirit, in ministry as well as administration within the body, is threatening or wrong for the church. And so this *yes* is not really a *yes*. Scripture might advise that one's *yes* should be a *yes* and one's *no* a *no*, but Synod decided it didn't have to be that way.

I understand that the motivation for many is to accept a compromise for the sake of peace, but a *yes* that is also a *no* is not a decision for peace. It is a decision that reminds me of racist legislators in the American South during the 1950s who decided *yes*, blacks could ride the bus just like whites, but they must sit in the back. There had to be some distinction made that would keep blacks in their assigned place, and their assigned place was under the control of whites. This decision by Synod with respect to women is no different, the message is: *women need to know their place is not beside men in the life of the church – stay in the back.*

So how does that make me feel? Discriminated against, definitely. Weary, and inclined to want to disconnect myself emotionally from the church. There are different ways of leaving; one is taking distance emotionally. Synod may have feared the possibility of some ministers and elders among them declaring their intent to leave the denomination if they were forced to serve God and their church with women at their side. That fear would be justified, and such leaving regrettable. It pains me to think there will be women who will leave in some way because of this decision – capable women whose gifts benefit the denomination. And I regret that a majority at Synod did not fear that possibility.

I hope that next year's Synod will not feel bound by this year's Synod's attempt to restrict seven consecutive synods with respect to this issue. My hope and prayer is that sooner, rather than later, this shaky peace created by a *yes* that is also a *no*, will be replaced by an unqualified *yes* towards a more lasting peace.

Judy Cook
Hamilton, Ontario

Showing reverence

When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man's labor on earth - his eyes not seeing sleep day or night - then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.

Ecclesiastes 8: 16,17

A.A. van Ruler

Notice the reverence with which the Preacher speaks of things. In the first place, he doesn't hesitate to speak of "all that God has done" under the sun. Usually the Preacher focuses on people toiling under the sun, working in the sweat of their brows. The world looks like an anthill, with millions and millions of people swarming over top of one another. All of them are after something, striving with all their might. That's human life. That's society. That's the overpowering process that we call world history.

Here, however, the Preacher speaks of all this as the work of God. In other words, it is not just a purely earthly and merely human business. It is sacred. God works out his council in it. All of reality is an act of God – a long chain of acts of God. This is, we might say, the depth dimension of all that is and all that occurs and also its supra dimension.

We must show reverence here – not just for God, but also for his work. And therefore we must also show reverence for life, for human beings, for the world and for history.

We must not act as though there is another world than the one we have and are, another world that is more really God's. Nor that that world is the one we should revere, while this world is merely an earthly or human reality. Such ways of thinking overlook the sacredness of this world and this life. It is *this* world that is God's world. Any other worlds are no business of ours. God is acting under the sun – not above it.

Part of our reverence for the sacredness of this existence is the conviction that what happens under the sun possesses a certain unity and plan. This world has meaning and purpose. That's one reason why being here is good. God's council is in it, and therefore also his thinking and his willing. He thinks things through with his wisdom and he wills them in his goodness.

This conviction is an essential part of our reverence for being. Nowadays many speak of the meaninglessness of life or of the absurdity of existence. What is invariably missing from such talk is the heart, an attitude of reverence. It is true that the meaninglessness and absurdity of life is portrayed as painful. But many seem astonishingly certain that life is indeed meaningless and absurd. But, warns the Preacher, let's not act like know-it-alls. Maybe we should lower the volume a little. For, after all, everything that happens under the sun is the work of God.

This does not mean that we can clearly see God's hand in it. That is something else altogether. Although reality is God's work, this does not mean that we can see it as such. However, we must not leap to the opposite conclusion: just because we cannot see that reality is God's work is no reason to immediately conclude that it isn't God's work. There is after all a huge gap between knowing and being. This too is part of reverence: that we don't draw cocksure conclusions about being directly from our knowledge.

But there is also another side to our reverence – one that involves our knowing. Don't be afraid to come out into the open with it, says the Preacher. Don't be afraid to say that we can see nothing of this work of God's under the sun. There is so much here that is opaque and perplexing. It is full of contradictions and much is beyond our comprehension. Again and again God does things that raise numerous questions and we don't have the answers.

In this respect, the Preacher is very radical: he says that we human beings cannot comprehend anything of God's work under the sun. We can't help but ask: Can we really know nothing at all? You mean we never even catch as much as a glimpse of God's wisdom and goodness? Don't we sometimes catch glimmers of light in human life and in world history?

Some are more sure than others one way or the other. And at certain times people are more inclined to say yea or nay. In the 19th century Hegel thought he could trace the acts of God in history from A to Z. Nowadays people grope for words to describe the opacity and violence of history.

Rembrandt: [Blind] Tobit going to greet Tobias

The Preacher says, If you think about it long and hard, you'll eventually come to the conclusion that you really cannot discover anything of God's work. He himself was so determined to get to the heart of the matter that he didn't sleep day or night. In other words, he was wide awake. But when our eyes are wide open and we're fully conscious, the light becomes so bright and glaring that we can no longer see anything at all.

Take a good look at things! Look around at what is happening! Do you see God working? Isn't it true that when we try to get to the bottom of things, everything appears unfathomable? Take the simplest thing that exists: isn't it as such an indication of God's sovereignty and majesty – so much so that it overwhelms our very senses?

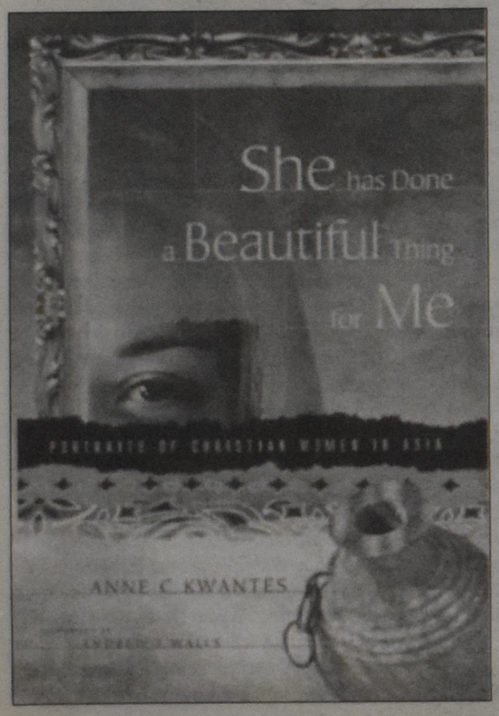
"Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it," says the Preacher, taunting the wise and wisdom itself. Even wisdom isn't wise enough. She cannot fathom the ground of things and so cannot discover their groundlessness. All human thought and philosophy falls short. Reality is too large. It can only be lived – in faith. This too is part of reverence – to see that the cup of reason is too small to empty the sea of being and that only the heart of faith is sufficient, only the act of existing before the face of God.

To this we must add one more important facet of obedience. Notice that the Preacher does not lament about the opaque and perplexing nature of reality. He doesn't lodge any complaints against God about his work under the sun. All he does is to ascertain radically that we can know nothing of it. He respects the majesty and sovereignty of the Creator. God alone holds the secret of all things in his hands.

Perhaps we will one day come to see it. This is one facet of the eschatological expectation that flows through the whole Bible from beginning to end. Part of eternal life is that we will one day see the reasonableness of the whole of temporal existence. But this idea is not part of the Preacher's reflections; he limits himself to the present. Here and now, he says, we cannot make heads or tail of it all.

We must accept that. But it is silly to then conclude that reality is therefore irrational, that the world is therefore not God's work or that God doesn't even exist. All that we can say is that we cannot comprehend it all. But in the meantime, we do exist. We live – and in spite of everything, we realize that it is good to be alive.

A celebration of Christian women in Asia



She Has Done a Beautiful Thing for Me: Portraits of Christian Women in Asia
by Anne C. Kwantes
(Manila: OMF Literature Inc., 2005)
Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In his forward to Kwantes' book, Professor Andrew F. Walls of the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, says, "Christian history has suffered a long Western captivity, where the historical lens has been directed to events in the West, while events that took place in Asia and Africa have lain unnoticed." Dr. Kwantes begins to correct that imbalance by presenting portraits of Asian Christian women beginning in 1250 to the present day.

Kwantes' chapter, "Women in Mission," is particularly enlightening. She points out that "revival and awakening had brought out the idea that, as creatures before God, women and men are equal." Yet, it required much courage for women to take their God-given place on the mission field.

Obstacles abounded. Since initially it was considered improper for single women to become missionaries, women were only sent to the mission field with their missionary husbands. On the other hand, it was frowned upon for a single man to go overseas, so marriages were hastily arranged at times to allow for this convention. Some women who longed to participate in missions considered this one avenue to pursue their calling from God. Marriages begun under such circumstances were not always happy arrangements.

Eventually circumstances changed. Years later female missionaries were allowed to continue their work after the deaths of their husbands, and single women were sent overseas. Kwantes points out that by 1900 single Protestant women outnumbered men in many mission projects.

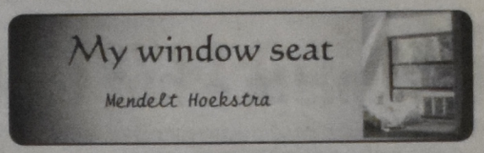
Missionary women, single and married, faced numerous hardships – steep child mortality rates, life-threatening illnesses, dangerous traveling conditions, and separation from children who had to return to North America, to name a few.

Yet women persisted in pursuing their calling because they could serve God in areas where men couldn't; in many Asian cultures men weren't allowed to enter the world of women. If women weren't on the mission field, who would help the prostitutes, serve as women's physicians, educate girls, provide housing for widows, rescue child-widows, and serve as midwives? The need for female missionaries was obvious, but, even once on the mission field, women continued to face an uphill battle in order to pursue their calling.

Kwantes' fascinating portraits include Sorkaktani (died 1252), mother of Kublai Khan; Lillias S. Horton Underwood (1851-1921), physician to Korea's Queen Min; Tena Holkeboer (1895-1965), teacher in China; and Lucy del Carmen Apostol (1932-), nurse and evangelist in her native Philippines. This reader especially enjoyed the chapter about Pandita Ramabai Dongre (1858-1922), who spent her life helping child-widows and other destitute women and children in her native India.

She Has Done a Beautiful Thing for Me makes for interesting reading. Kwantes vividly brings to life the experiences of Asian women in various cultures and times who longed to serve the Lord, and who, by his grace, were able to overcome the daunting obstacle of gender discrimination.

Word fun



At the lunch table at work I overheard someone say that they "slept like a baby" the night before. With a five-week-old baby, that saying has a different meaning to me than it may to the average person. I asked the person, if it is true that they slept like a baby, did that mean that they woke up six times, wet the bed twice and spent three of those hours crying and fussing? That to me is sleeping like a baby.

It makes one curious about our English language and its quirks and quotes. I did a bit of digging. These aren't my own creations but I searched them out and gathered them from various sources.

There is neither 'egg' in 'eggplant' nor 'ham' in 'hamburger'. Why is the word 'apple' in 'pineapple' if there is no apple present? English muffins were not invented in England nor French fries in France.

Why is the word 'long' shorter than the word 'short'? Why is the word 'abbreviated' such a long word? Why is 'phonics' not spelled the way is sounds? If a word is misspelled in the dictionary, would we ever know? Why does 'overlook' and 'oversee' mean two very different things? Shouldn't there be a shorter word for 'monosyllabic'? What is another word for 'thesaurus'? Why isn't "palindrome" spelled the same way backwards?

Quicksand works slowly, boxing rings are square, and a Guinea pig is neither from Guinea or a pig. If people from Poland are called Poles, why aren't people from Holland called Holes?

After having read a book, you can reread it. If that is true, wouldn't this mean that you would have to 'member' someone in order to remember them? Is it a coincidence that the only 15 letter word that can be spelled without repeating a letter is 'uncopyrightable'?

If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth beeth? If it is said one goose, two geese, why not one moose, two meese? People recite at a play and play at a recital. We ship by truck and send cargo by ship.

We have noses that run and feet that smell. We fill in a form by filling it out. Why is bra singular and panties plural?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance mean the same thing? Why do they call it rush hour when traffic moves the slowest? Can one take a crash course in flying? When one presses the door bell button, is the ring finger supposed to be used? Should guests leave a banquet fed up? Why do we chop down a tree and then chop it up?

How is it that when we bite down, our jaw moves up? When we say something tongue-in-cheek, why don't we bite our tongue? Why is it that when we lose our temper, we still have one? When the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible.

Words are wonderful and confusing. New words are added to the Oxford Dictionary each year. These words are a sign of our times. A few words that were added in 2006 are counterterrorism, DVD, freakazoid, FYI, Hold'Em (relating to poker), yada yada and Google which is described as a verb – and where I found much of this information by Googling.

The rules for English were made by people and not computers, which reflects the creativity of the human race, which is not a race at all.

Mendelt D. Hoekstra is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization owned and operated by the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario, that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in Vineland, ON with Marisa and their three children.

A Woman of Courage ... *continued from page 10*

as it explores the political and social implications of Muslim teachings and their relationship to a free and "open society." He wrote:

We appreciate that your views have been controversial and are likely to remain so; we believe that controversies such as these, when conducted in a spirit of civility and reasoned inquiry, are essential to intellectual progress, and are to be welcomed rather than feared....

Let me add that I have been deeply angered by the unfair and partisan attacks that have been leveled against you and have admired your courage and forthrightness in the face of this hounding.

The enemies of freedom and civility in the Netherlands can "rejoice," for they have managed to get rid of a brave and honorable woman – a women who somehow overcame the sort of obstacles that spoiled Westerners cannot, and dare not, even imagine. And we should be glad because she has found a new home where she will be able to put her impressive abilities to work in a much more hospitable environment.

But this is no occasion for rejoicing by Americans. For the loss is not only Holland's but all of Europe's, and therefore America's too. The destiny of both continents are intertwined in such a way that extinguishing the light of freedom in Europe will also cast a darkening cloud across America.

Latest news on Ali:

Under pressure from the Dutch parliament, on June 27 Rita Verdonk Minister of Immigration in The Netherlands, declared that Ayaan Hirsi Ali's Dutch citizenship was and is valid. Most members of parliament agree that Verdonk made a serious mistake when she first announced that Ali never was a Dutch citizen

Afterward Ali graciously absolved Verdonk of all blame and took all the blame herself.

Verdonk graciously agreed to let her take all the blame. Verdonk's political future now seems to be in worse shape than Ali's.

Theology

Calvinism – hot topic of debate among Southern Baptists

Michael Foust

GREENSBORO, N.C. (BP) – Saying they hope to serve as a model for the rest of the Southern Baptist Convention, seminary presidents R. Albert Mohler Jr. and Paige Patterson discussed their differences over the doctrine of election, stressing that believers can disagree on the topic while remaining friends and unified in the goal of evangelism and missions.

"I do hope we will provide at least an example on that point, if on no other," Patterson said. Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and Patterson, president of Southwestern Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, discussed Calvinism during two one-hour-long breakout sessions of the SBC Pastors' Conference at a convention hotel ballroom. Mohler affirms Calvinism, while Patterson does not. The sessions, titled, "Reaching Today's World Through Differing Views of Election," drew standing room only crowds. "We were expecting eight or 10 of you," Patterson quipped.

Each man spoke for 20 minutes before fielding questions submitted prior to the session. Saying that Patterson is a "friend in the Gospel," Mohler pointed to former great men of faith – such as John Wesley and George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon and D.L. Moody – who had disagreements over election but nonetheless considered one another Christian brothers and "cooperated together in evangelism."

"This is a conversation among close friends," Mohler said.

Both Mohler and Patterson disagreed in classifying the session as a "debate." But both men made clear that they had honest disagreements.

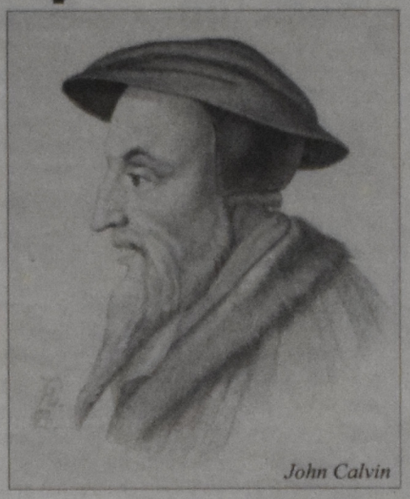
"Reading the Scripture we have to face squarely that God is a choosing God in the exercise of his sovereignty," Mohler said. "He chose Israel. He chose Jacob. And as the Apostle Paul makes clear, he chooses sinners."

But Patterson said, "The calling of God is made to all men, and then men must decide whether they will respond to the calling or not."

Patterson: people are 'totally free'

Patterson began his segment by saying, to laughter, "The real question we are here to discuss today is whether or not you are here on your own free will."

He listed six areas in which he and Calvinists agree – areas for which he said he has great appreciation. Calvinists, Patterson said: "usually lead very pious lives"; believe theology is important; generally are "very clear about the dangers involved in the charismatic movement; "understand the purpose of everything is to glorify God"; "never question the inerrancy of Scripture or the substitutionary atonement of Christ"; and "are crystal clear about the fact that salvation is by grace alone."



John Calvin

But Patterson also said there are several areas of concern he has with "some Calvinists":

- **the notion** that if "you are not a Calvinist then you must be an Arminian." He said he is neither.
- **the argument** that "if you are not a Calvinist then you do not accept the doctrines of grace." Patterson said, "I believe that salvation is by grace alone, and I'm not a Calvinist."
- **the assertion** that those who are not Calvinists don't believe in the sovereignty of God. "I just happen to believe that God is sovereign enough that he can make a man totally free if he wishes to do so," Patterson said.
- **"antinomian tendencies"** present "in some Calvinists," particularly on the subject of drinking alcohol. Antinomianism tends to overemphasize grace in relation to law.
- **a failure** of Reformed pastors to be "completely forthright" with pulpit committees during interviews. "This is a concern not only about Calvinists," Patterson said. "It is a concern about people who happen to be dispensationalists, like me. It's a concern about any position which you hold." There should be "full disclosure of what you believe and what you plan to do once you become the pastor of that church."
- **the "compassionlessness"** for a lost world seen in "some Calvinists." Patterson said what he "appreciate[s] so much about Dr. Mohler and many of my other Calvinist friends is that that emphatically is not true of them."

Patterson said he views the doctrine of election through the "foreknowledge of God." He also said he sees no biblical evidence for "irresistible grace" – one of the tenets of Calvinism. "If, in fact, men cannot resist the will of the Holy Spirit. Then in fact salvation is coercive and a person does not have a choice about what he is going to do," he said. " I believe it is God's will that every human being be saved. I don't believe all of them will be saved – narrow is the way, and straight is the gate."

Patterson read two quotes he attributed to Presbyterian pastor R.C. Sproul: "God desired man to fall into sin. God created sin"; and "It is [God's] desire to make his wrath known. He needed, then, something on which to be wrathful. He needed to have sinful creatures."

"It is impossible to find justice in that by any biblical definition of justice," Patterson said. "This makes God, in some sense, the author of sin."

He listed several scriptural passages – 1 Timothy 2:3-6, 2 Peter 3:9, Hebrews 2:9, 1 John 2:2 – that he said support general atonement instead of the Calvinist tenant of limited (or particular) atonement.

"To me, the references to the universality of the atonement are absolutely overwhelming in the New Testament," Patterson said. "The Calvinist must fall back on the idea of two wills of God – a revealed will and a secret will. The problem with the secret will, of course, is that it is secret and we cannot know about [it] at all. Not only that, [but] it pits the secret will in juxtaposition and over against his revealed will."

Patterson challenged those in attendance, "My fervent prayer is that whatever your beliefs are about the sovereignty of God. You will join me in taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth."

Mohler: Southern Baptists affirm God's sovereignty

During his segment Mohler, who affirms the five points of Calvinism, said it was "good and healthy" for Southern Baptists to discuss theology.

"It's a sign of a mature denomination," said Mohler, who was speaking one day after undergoing eye cornea surgery, and obviously was bothered by the bright lights.

"Were it not for the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention," he added, the discussion over election might instead be over the ordination of homosexuals.

"By God's grace we are not there," he said to applause. Southern Baptists, Mohler said, affirm God's sovereignty in salvation even if they don't call themselves Calvinists.

"In your local church, when you send out an evangelism team, you don't say, 'Good luck,'" he said. "You pray that God will open hearts and open minds. When we listen to ourselves pray, we really do hear a strong confidence in the sovereignty of God.

"The doctrine of election explains why we go with confidence to share the Gospel – because God does call sinners to himself, through the blood of Jesus Christ.

"As the parable of the sower of the soil makes clear, we cannot read the human heart. We do not know who is the fertile heart and who is the resistant heart. We just know there are sinners who need to hear the Gospel, and thus we preach the Gospel to all persons, knowing that God does save." All Christians, Mohler said, are called to spread the Gospel.

"Why do we go?" he asked. "We go because we honestly believe that whosoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved. God always blesses the preaching of the Gospel. And he does so because he is not a spectator, but he is the God who saves through the means of the Gospel." Answering a point posed by Patterson – that if Calvinism is true then a person could be drawn against his will, Mohler said, "I do not believe that such a person exists.

"Rather, I believe the doctrine of effectual calling, that Scripture says once that work is begun, and that person is drawn unto Christ, then that person will come to faith in Christ and will be authentically saved," he said. "I do not believe in the fictitious person who is drawn to faith in Christ against his will. I do not believe that that is possible.

Human will, Mohler said, is not "contravened by God."

"The Lord's will – as the initiating will – wills the human will to will what the Father wills," he said. "When Dr. Patterson shares the Gospel and when I share the Gospel, we do so honestly and urgently believing that if that person to whom we shared the Gospel of Christ responds in faith, she or he will be saved."

Mohler further said that all Southern Baptist believe in a form of limited atonement – otherwise, he said, they would be universalists.

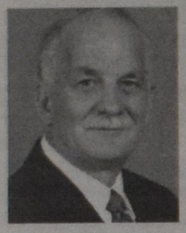
"The question is, how is the atonement limited and by whom?" He said. "I would prefer to speak of particular redemption. I do believe before the creation of the world God determined to save sinners – and not just in a general sense, but in an actual sense, persons who would come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Mohler listed five areas in which all Southern Baptists are "one form of Calvinists or another":

- **a belief in the inerrancy of Scripture.** "It is not by accident that there are no great Arminian testimonies to the inerrancy of Scripture," Mohler said. "We really do believe that God can work in such a way that the human will wills to do what God wills that will to do. And that is exactly why we believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. We do not believe that the Apostle Paul was irresistibly against his will drawn to write the Book of Romans."
- **a belief in the substitutionary atonement.** The logic of this doctrine fits only within "the umbrella of a Calvinist scheme." "The entire worldview in which substitution makes sense is a worldview in which the sovereignty of God and the righteousness of God and the saving purpose of God are vindicated in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ."
- **affirming the "omniscience of God."** "At the very least God created this world knowing exactly who would come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," Mohler said. "Some of us believe more than that,

Justice

`I don't have a problem with restorative justice,' says Canada's new Justice Minister



Gladys Terichow

WINNIPEG, Man. – Canada's new justice minister, Vic Toews, expects to leave a legacy of cracking down on crime.

"If you don't crack down on crime none of your other programs will be successful," said Toews in a telephone interview, explaining health, education, economic and social programs can only be successful when safety and security concerns have been addressed.

In May he introduced two bills – one bill proposes to strengthen mandatory minimum sentencing for crimes involving firearms and the other one to end the use of house arrests for serious offences.

Toews described the two bills as "two components of a successful crime strategy" but he emphasized the government also supports alternative approaches to crime prevention and support for victims and offenders.

"How do we ensure that society is best served? It is best served through various mechanisms," he said.

Toews, the Member of Parliament for Provencher in Southern Manitoba, said he is "very familiar" with restorative justice models of dealing with crime and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) programs based on this model.

Principles and values of restorative justice, he said, are generally seen in provincial and community based programs, and not in federal legislation.

"The criminal justice system is a very narrow system – it is a mechanism that identifies criminal wrong doing and determines how best to deal with the crime," said Toews.

"These two bills deal with two specific issues – they deal with two narrow aspects of the justice system and don't address victims and restorative justice. I don't have a problem with restorative justice. It can be very helpful but it needs proper criteria and it needs to be a structured system."

Restorative justice, he explained, can take place within the context of traditional sentencing. Toews cited Mennonite Central Committee's Victims' Voice as an example of a restorative justice program that works well within the current justice system.

Victims' Voice, in partnership with the John Howard Society of Manitoba and Mediation Services, has developed a Safe Justice Encounters program to help victims deal with the aftermath of the crime through communicating with their offenders. These visits are generally with offenders serving a prison sentence.

Toews noted participants in this program might feel the prison sentence did not address their needs for justice but incarceration makes it possible for victims to communicate with their offenders.

He also supports appropriate support and programs for offenders — this includes offenders in prisons and those who did not get a prison sentence. Offenders who are not incarcerated must also have access to appropriate support and programs, said Toews.

His Christian faith, he added, influences his contributions to the justice system. "What you try to do is make the system work better. The ultimate hope is that those who come into contact with the system will be better off. The goal is to ensure that both victims and criminals are better off."

James Loewen-Malloy, restorative justice coordinator for MCC Canada, in a separate interview said that he would like to see fundamental reforms to the Canadian criminal justice system that would make the victim the "client" and central focus of the justice system. In the current system the police serve the state, the crown attorney is responsible to the state and the crime is committed against the state.

"It is hard to envision a victim-focused system because it would look so different," said Loewen-Malloy, explaining a victim-focused system "would understand that justice begins when a victim reports a crime, not when an offender is caught." Restorative justice provides opportunity for victims to heal and find justice in their communities.

Restorative justice, he explained, is based on the premise that crime inflicts harm to individuals and offenders must accept responsibility for that harm.

Instead of emphasizing punishment and retribution, restorative justice holds offenders directly accountable to the people they have violated and provides opportunity for making amends. It is a process that involves strengthening the role of victims and the community to hold offenders accountable for their actions.

Fundamental reforms, he said, are needed to restore public confidence in the Canadian justice system. He pointed to a Statistics Canada survey that states only one-third of crime is reported.

"If 66 per cent of people who get sick in Canada don't want to be part of the health system or are worse off because they were part of it, would we be happy? I would say, no, we wouldn't be."

Gladys Terichow is a writer for MCC Canada Communications

Calvinism ... *continued from p. 16*

but certainly none of us here believes less than that.... If that be so then the precise identity of all the persons who would come to faith in Christ was known by the Father before the world was created."

a belief in the eternal security of the believer. "Once this work of salvation is accomplished in the life of a sinner, and that sinner is transformed by the grace and mercy of God, he can never fall away," he said.

Mohler said he preaches "without hesitation the 'whosoevers' and the 'alls'" found in the Bible. "Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved – I believe that emphatically," he said. But Mohler said some preachers intentionally ignore certain passages of the Bible.

"I do believe there is irresistible preaching, because a lot of preachers manage to resist Romans chapter 8," he said to laughter.

Mohler said he wants "to be known" for his commitment "to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ" and not for his belief on the doctrine of election.

"I feel no accountability to John Calvin. I feel an indebtedness to him, but I'm not accountable to him nor would I wish to wear his name, nor, I believe, would he wish anyone to wear his name," Mohler said. "[Calvinism] is a categorization which I don't deny if you're talking about a strain of theology. But I am accountable to the Word of God and the Gospel of Christ.

"I'm not here in the name of John Calvin. I'm here in name of – same initials, different name – Jesus Christ.

Two streams into one river

Both Mohler and Patterson said too many people, when debating Calvinism, have a judgmental attitude toward one another. Mohler quipped that some people frame it thusly, "Are you or have you ever been a Calvinist?"

"I would caution my non-Calvinist brethren against the conclusion that the doctrine of Calvin automatically means that a person will not and cannot be evangelistic," Patterson said. "One of the commands that the Lord gives is to take the Gospel to the ends of earth. No Calvinist worthy of his stripe would thereby disobey a command of God."

Mohler agreed that there are "hyper-Calvinists" – those who reject the need to spread the Gospel – within the SBC. But he said it is by nature a small group.

"If you ever find a vital hyper-Calvinist movement, you will have a living oxymoron," he said. Five-point Calvinism, Mohler said, "is not hyper-Calvinism."

"However, if one takes an additional logical jump from that point and says, 'Therefore, we should not present the Gospel to all persons,' they are in direct conflict with the Scripture and direct disobedience to the call of God and in direct contradiction to the model of the apostles," he said. Said Patterson, "It's very unfair to a Calvinist to refer to him as a hyper-Calvinist. It prejudges him. I think instead you ought to ask him, 'What do you believe?' If he's wrong about it – if he goes too far in one direction – you can correct that. I don't like name-calling."

Mohler cautioned Calvinists against having "a debating personality."

"It is not healthy to have a person who will drive across the state to debate Calvinism but won't even drive across the street to share the Gospel," he said.

The two men said Southern Baptists can learn much from studying the history of the debate over election – both within the history of Christianity and within the SBC.

"This is an old discussion," Patterson said. "It's a discussion that predates Calvin. It is a discussion that predates Augustine. God's people have always struggled to try to figure out what is it that God has done on one hand and what is it for which we are responsible on the other. "It's a good discussion, it's a healthy discussion, as long as we don't begin to anathematize one another for our various perspectives and as long as the discussion of this theology or any other theology does not become an impediment to the most important thing, which is getting the Gospel of Christ to 6.5 billion people."

Within SBC history, Patterson said, "both sides of this discussion are well-represented." He said there are two "streams" of belief flowing into the same river. One stream was the Charleston, S.C., stream, which was "more Calvinistic," the other was the Sandy Creek, N.C., stream which was "more revivalistic," Patterson said. Yet the Sandy Creek statement of faith also had a "very Calvinistic strain," he added.

The majority of the founders of the SBC, Mohler said, held to Calvinist beliefs.

"They were themselves representative of a great Baptist movement that itself was a part of the great evangelical movement," he said. "It is no accident that [British missionary] William Carey held these very beliefs, and thus he went to India to begin the modern missionary movement. It is no accident that those who founded this denomination likewise held those beliefs, and those very beliefs compelled them into world missions."

Calvinism, Mohler said, is "part of the stream that has brought us to this place."

"Dr. Patterson and I have discussed this far more extensively than a one-hour presentation here would allow," Mohler said. "It's a part of the vibrancy of our friendship in the Gospel. We owe it to each other as brothers in Christ, who share an affection for the Gospel to, as iron sharpens iron, talk about these issues so that we can be evermore faithful in preaching and teaching the Gospel." Patterson urged Southern Baptists not to follow the example of the English Baptists who divided over the issue. After the split, those who held to limited atonement (the particular Baptists) became "anti-missionary and anti-evangelistic," while those who held to general atonement (the General Baptists) emphasized doctrine so little that they "became universalists," Patterson said. "The splitting of the two did them no favors and pushed them in opposite directions that were very unfortunate," he said. "If we allow Satan to have his way, we'll divide up over it, as we certainly should not," Patterson said.

Welcome to my perch
Bert Witvoet

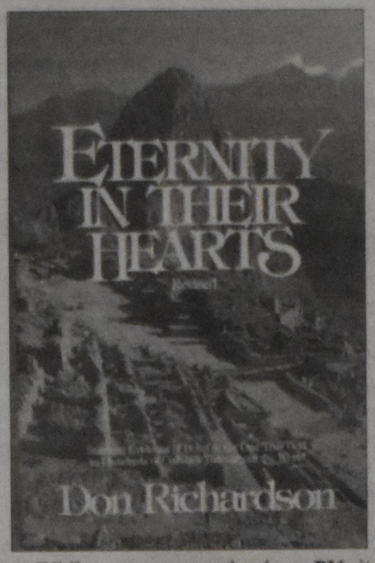
Vacation: a time to listen to Hananim

This column is going to be a series of unconnected thoughts and experiences that can be the hallmark of one's journey through life but also of an actual journey through Canada and the United States. Alice and I are on our way to the west coast to visit our western children and grandchildren. A journey like that hangs together only because we, two human entities held together by skin, are experiencing it. But there is no over-arching theme written across the landscape like a colossal golden arch of MacDonald's (praise God for that!). Seeing that this is summer and many people set aside a purpose-driven life, only to hang their tootsies from a dock in the water, the reader will not be too harsh on me for splashing about a little without too much concern for the ultimate questions about the meaning of life. Not that we forget to seek first the Kingdom of heaven when we stop at a Dairy Queen for a chocolate-covered medium cone, but we seek it playfully, like little children.

Maybe vacationing is a bit like what I read on a young man's t-shirt yesterday: "Procrastination in progress." If I had seen the young man in question wear that slogan while attending a class I was teaching years ago, I might have sent out a few puffs of cerebral smoke from my ears. But seeing that it is the end of June, and the weather is appropriately balmy, Iembrace the statement like a fellow traveler under the sun of the Almighty. I don't think the Preacher indicated that there is a time to visit a Dairy Queen and a time to refrain from doing so, but it comes close to a statement like: "There is a time to mourn and a time to dance." The ethos of daily life gets adjusted when we go on holidays.

Everything beautiful

Actually, for me, that ethos sometimes gets deepened a bit. When you read further into chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes, you find out that Solomon questions the usefulness of toil – "What does the worker gain from his toil?" he asks. "He [that is, God] has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of people; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end." I think Solomon is hinting at two reasons why we cannot fathom what God has done: first, because God is God and we are mere human creatures; but, second, because we toil so much and the beauty that he has given to all things he made escapes us. What escapes us also all too often is that God has set eternity in our hearts. A period of procrastination in progress – like our trip out west – can actually remedy that situation.



While we were camping in an RV site with our miniature Volkswagen (miniature compared to the fifty-foot trailers that surrounded us), we met a young man (44 still counts for young, right?) in a site next to ours. His name was Brian. He was alone in his 30-foot trailer, while he could have stayed at his Mom's place 20 miles down the road. In our conversation with him, we soon discovered that he was in trouble. He owns a garbage disposal truck and business some 40 miles north of the camp, but was in danger of losing his driver's license for a while because he had been caught drinking and driving one night. The girlfriend he lives with has threatened to kick him out of the house if he doesn't straighten out.

Road to nowhere

After a few hours of getting acquainted, I discovered that he had grown up in the Christian Reformed Church and that he had attended a Christian high school. But he lost interest in the Christian faith for some untold or unknown reason. It wasn't that the church or the faith had turned him off. He just didn't enjoy going to church anymore, like so many other young and older men. We talked about faith and why it's so important to be reconciled to God. Surely, he couldn't be happy with the way his life was going right now! The next day was Sunday, and we invited him to accompany us to a Christian Reformed Church in town. He agreed to come.

While in church, both Alice and I prayed quietly that God might address him through the sermon especially. We were not disappointed. The pastor preached about Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Saul, who became Paul, talked about that in later letters to the churches, how God had mercy on him, a man who had persecuted the church and who considered himself the worst sinner possible. "If Jesus can bridge the gap between Saul and God, then those of you present in this church who suffer from addictions or have made some big mistakes in your life can also find hope and salvation," the pastor said. My heart said "Yes," several times as he spoke. God was addressing our friend Brian, as well as all of us, of course.

On the way back to the camp, I said to the young man that God had spoken very clearly to him that morning. He agreed, and said that he had cried a few times during the service. When I bade him farewell, I reminded him that he should take advantage of the way God had spoken to him because he would not get that many more opportunities like this. He said he would return to church and seek to mend his ways with God's help. We don't know what will happen to this young man, but it was a clear sign to us that God had set eternity also in his heart.

Ancient knowledge

Actually, Alice had picked up a book in Grand Rapids called *Eternity in Their Hearts* by Don Richardson, and we both read it along the way. Don Richardson is talking about the fact that hundreds of people groups in the world who had never heard the gospel before had from time immemorial been brought up with either a clear or a vague concept of one eternal God who had made all things and was above all the lesser gods they were worshiping through their idols. But they knew so little about this God and none of their priests or elders could enlighten them either. Those missionaries who connected with this concept and linked the gospel message with this ancient understanding of a universal god were the most successful. Richardson's earlier book *The Peace Child* is an example of such a successful linkage.

And if you ever want to know why it is that Christianity took such a strong hold of the hearts of Koreans since its introduction in the late 19th century, read *Eternity in Their Hearts*. According to their own ancient traditions, Hananim (their name for The Great One, who predates Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism by an unknown number of centuries) had a son who desired to live among humans. When Christians came to speak of Jesus as the way to the Father God (Hananim), Koreans listened with awe and converted by the thousands. Today more than 50 per cent of Koreans are Christians

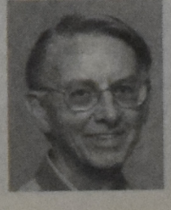
A time to disconnect?

So you see, holiday time can be a time for reminding ourselves that God has placed that incurable longing in our hearts for the eternal beauty of God. "I know that everything God does will endure forever," writes the Preacher; "nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will revere him forever." But to notice this, and to nurture that longing for eternity, you sometimes have to engage in procrastination in progress. You sometimes have to stop toiling.

When I started writing this column, I thought it was going to be a stream-of-consciousness piece with no over-arching theme. But here it is, written in large throughout this account: "God has set eternity in our hearts."

Well, let me return to my original intention of avoiding an overall message. Outside the park there is a church sign that reads on one side: "A smile is a curve that can set things straight." On the other side it reads, "Good and evil can never be partners." What's the connection with my over-all theme? Zilch! Nada! Rien! Niks. "Niks in de winkel. Alles in de kelder. De kelder kaput!" There, I just wanted to prove to you that I can escape the purpose-driven life while on holidays.

Hmm … Do you think Hananim is speaking through that church sign?



Bert Witvoet is a former editor of CC, retired, and now editing the Christian Educators Journal, *preaching the occasional sermon and prodding the local Chr. School board.*

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Dutch visitor ... *continued from page 11*

I can't avoid the impression that it has a positive influence. Now that I'm doing my best also to say 'thank you' I'm noticing that I'm not only making someone else happy, but it also influences my own attitude. It creates a situation where you don't just see everything as a given, but you take people seriously – even the cashier, the bus driver, or the paper boy. The beautiful thing is that, as a thankful person, you start valuing other people more. Saying thank you makes you a thankful person.

To my amazement, there is not only Mothers Day, Fathers Day and Secretary Day, but even a Thank-Your-Pastor Day – a Sunday on which members of the congregation thank the pastor for, as it says inside the card, wisdom, love, faith, and passion in leading the congregation.

I'm certain that if you asked a pastor in the Netherlands whether they would want that, they would burst out laughing. But I'm also certain that pastors would appreciate it if members of the congregation would send them a little thank-you note now and then....

Oh yes . . . I almost forgot . . . Thanks for reading this column.

June 7, 2006

Giving is sowing

Americans give more to charity than any other people in the world, and the people of Grand Rapids and Western Michigan are the most open handed of all Americans in giving. This has much to do with their Reformed background, with the Kuyperian notion that everything one is and has is from God and belongs to him. One's talents, one's money and possessions are all gifts from God to be used to his honor and for the benefit of one's neighbor. These are words that I hear regularly from the mouths of hardworking Christians who give at least a tenth of their income to the church and charity.

But I've also heard the same words from the mouth of one of Grand Rapid's richest sons, Richard De Vos (whose first name, it's worth noting, is often shortened to Rich). He recently spoke nearby at a conference of Christian business people where I was invited to attend. I really wanted to hear him speak – the old Fox ('vos,' after all, means fox in Dutch!) – because I remember as a child hearing stories about him and his company.

Wherever you go here you see his name on something – usually accompanied by his picture. There is an enormous convention center, a civic theater, the biggest hotel, a museum, and a boulevard . . . . Then there is the pedestrian bridge on the Calvin College campus, the Center for Excellence in Preaching in the Theological Seminary, stipends for North Korean students – all named after and made possible by Rich De Vos and a number other businessmen and women in his wake.

In a country where Christians have always had to pay for everything themselves – without help from the government – this is a normal phenomenon. People help each other and those who have money support Christian initiatives and even help out the city where they live or grew up. If Rich De Vos or one of his immensely rich Christian brothers or sisters throws his financial weight behind a school, institution, or project, it can grow into something grand. As you can imagine, I was quite curious to hear his speech.

Right on time we heard his helicopter land on the lawn of the conference center. First a body guard slipped into the hall to check things out, and then De Vos entered – a small man with a beaming persona. He sat there calmly peering into the audience, and just when the introduction of the speaker started sounding like more like a hymn of praise, he decisively took over the microphone and began to speak. He talked about the lessons he's learned in life, about how he tries to encourage people and always tries to discover and acknowledge the positive in others. And he talked about how he realizes every day that he is richly blessed by God and his billions are not his own but gifts from God. And since I had just begun to see some of the thousands of small projects that he intentionally supports, I know that he meant what he said. I was moved.

I now understand more than ever not only that wealth is a an enormous responsibility for a Christian, but also that money in the hands of a Christian can be used toward great blessing. A gift that enables a new project to launch is like a seed sown in the expectation that, with God's blessing, it will bear much fruit for his Kingdom....

June 14, 2006

Let's keep in touch

On Friday we fly back to the Netherlands, so this week we're rounding things off and saying our good-byes. I'm concluding conversations with Calvin Theological Seminary about cooperation on a project for teaching preaching in Eastern Europe, and it looks promising. We are also saying good-bye to the congregation of the church we've often attended. Friends and acquaintances have kindly organized a farewell party.

It has been a real discovery for me to see that 6000 kilometers away from the Netherlands there are two large church denominations that are so very rooted in the Dutch mother church: The Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church.... These churches are dominant here and you see many of them all over the city. I am amazed to see here how intensely they study and translate Dutch theologians that have been all but forgotten in the Netherlands. It has been nice to experience the favorable treatment you get when people hear that you're from the Netherlands. The shared Dutch roots and the shared Reformed tradition create a natural bond that we have thoroughly enjoyed here.

At the same time there are considerable tensions in the relationship with the Netherlands. They read Argus-eyed about our abortion and euthanasia policies; they know all about our liberal drug policies and about homosexual marriage, and they distance themselves far from these things. The "Old Netherlands"– they can live with that. But the "New Netherlands"– where is that headed? I have felt ashamed when I sensed indignation about these issues, because amongst Dutch Christians I hardly hear a protest worth noting.

This week, on the Calvin College campus, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) meets. One of the topics scheduled is the relationship of the CRC with the Protestant Church of the Netherlands, and I have been invited to be present as an unofficial listener. Some time ago, the bond with the Gereformeerd Church in the Netherlands was more or less broken because the Gereformeerd church had become too liberal. But what about the situation in light of the new, fused church, the Protestant Church of the Netherlands?

I've had a number of conversations with ministers and professors about this because it really weighs on people's hearts. I notice that they would like to keep a relationship with the Dutch churches but don't quite know how to deal with the differences. I often hear the comment that they might be better off attempting a relationship with the Liberated Reformed Churches (Gereformeerd Vrijgemaakt). When I ask, though, which of the "Vrijgemaakt" churches they mean, people seem to be unaware of the radical changes that have taken place within that church.

The most pressing question for the Synod in this matter is this: has the fusion of the Dutch churches made this one large Dutch church more orthodox or more liberal? If they ask me about this, I point them to the first theological report on Jesus Christ, which is in my estimation true to Scripture and, thus, a good Reformed report. I also point them to the mission statement of the Protestant Church which states that the church wants again to be a missionary presence in society. I tell them what is happening at the local level. I tell them about stubborn secularism and also about how new shoots are growing on the chopped-down trunk. I tell them how we in the Netherlands – as churches and congregations – are seeking to serve God and to proclaim him to a post-modern society. And I notice how attentively people listen as I talk of these things.

I notice that when it comes to how to be a church and a Christian in these times, we share with each other many questions and a similar search for answers. That is why it is so important that we not shove each other into corners with all kinds of generalizations, but that we listen to each other openly and honestly and learn from each other. I think we ought to keep in close touch with other in matters of church and education. It will enrich us all.

Enthusiastic Americans are very different from the sober Dutch. And American Christians, who see opportunities everywhere, are different from the Dutch Christians, who prefer just to "wait and see." We sometimes seem like polar opposites. But everyone knows that opposites make for the best marriages. The two need to get to know one another well and value the other before they can move on together as opposite personalities. But if that happens – if there is mutual recognition and respect – then the opposites can wonderfully complement each other, and the sum can become greater than the parts.

In our world there are two large groups of Reformed Christians: one in the Netherlands and the other, 6000 kilometers away, in parts of America and Canada. They drink from the same well but live in different cultures. But it is precisely in meeting each other that they learn to look differently at what each other takes for granted. This teaches Christians to think anew about how they live and act in church and in life.

People here are busy working these things out, very intentionally, in church, in school, and at home – and even at the denominational recreation center where a sign reads: Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. The experience alone of seeing how these Christians intentionally try to live that out has made my stay here valuable.

For that I thank God. And I thank my brothers and sisters in Grand Rapids too!

Ron van der Spoel

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Classifieds

Thank You

Thank you

to all who remembered us on the ccasion of our 60th Wedding Anniversary. Your cards, flowers and/or presence at the Open House made it a truly memorable day. We thank God for his faithfulness.

Leo and Tena Batterink

Birthday

With love and thanksgiving,
we're proud to celebrate the **80th Birthday**
of our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother

Betty van Wyngaarden

on July 11, 2006.
We pray that God will give
both you and us many more memories.

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Rika & Henry de Jonge
Chris, Anita, Bradley & Sean; Tanya, Earl, Natasha, Janessa, Tianna, Wesley & Mercedes; Jodi, Eric & Kylie; Melanie

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Anniversaries

"God is good!" On July 19, 2006,

SIEGER AND GRIETJE VANDERMEER

will mark their **60th Wedding Anniversary.**
In celebration, their thankful children invite you to an **Open House** on Saturday, July 29, 2006
from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
in the Fellowship Hall of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Belleville, Ontario
Best wishes only.

They still reside at
83 North Park St., Belleville ON K8P 2Y6
in the home that Dad built in the 50's!

Anniversaries

1956 July 20 2006

With truly thankful hearts we celebrate
the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of

HANK AND BETTY HORINGA (nee **Holting**)

We thank the LORD for his goodness and faithfulness always present in our family.

With love and congratulations:
Coby & Harry Knibbe, *Aylmer, ON*
Anthony & Kristine – Annaka, Mike & Nicole – Payton, Jamie & Amy, Amy (& Benjamin)
Jake & Ann Horinga, *Woodstock, ON*
Julie, Brent, Stacey, Jayden
Jenny & George VanderVeen, *St. Thomas, ON*
Ryan, Kevin
Martha & Luke Sikkens, *North Pelham, ON*
Elizabeth, Kurt, Holly
Geraldine & John Bouwers, *Ancaster, ON*
Joshua, Rachel, Matthew, Lucas
Sid & Jeannette Horinga, *Dunnville, ON*
Jesse, Devin, Byron
Liz & Bruce Zantingh, *Dunnville, ON*
Nicole, Sarah, Aaron
Henry & Sue Horinga, *Woodstock, ON*
Justin, Larissa
John & Jennifer Horinga, *Princeton, ON*
Zachary, Torri, Benjamin
Jeff & Marcia Horinga, *Woodstock, ON*
28 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren.

An **Open House** is planned for
Saturday July 22, 2006 D.V. from 2 - 4 p.m. in
the Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church in Woodstock, ON

Home address: RR#4 Woodstock ON N4S 7V8

1956 August 15 2006

With thankfulness to God
we celebrate
with our children
and grandchildren
our
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DURK AND JANNY DE JONG
(nee **van't Land**)

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Obituaries

ALIE (Aaltje) VOS (Hartman)

February 19, 1915 Hoogeveen, Drente — June 15, 2006 Brampton, Ontario

Wife of Henk (Hendrik) Vos.
Mother of Jane & her husband Michael Moore *of Toronto,* and John & his wife Shirley Vos *of Sarasota, Fla.*
Grandmother of Alex (Nicolette), Megan (Jonathan) and Oliver (Katrina) Moore, and Eric and David Vos.
Great-grandmother of Sam Moore, Jacob and Joshua Richards.

We will remember her consistently high standards. Without fail she was a caring wife, mother and grandmother.

Correspondence: J. Moore, 42 Foxbar Rd, Toronto ON M4V 2G6

1 Corinthians 15:42-58

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. Philippians 1:21

FRED SCHURINGA

Born Frederik Johannes Schuringa
on March 5, 1935 in Enumatil, The Netherlands
Died June 23, 2006 in Oakville, Ontario

Dear husband, father and grandfather peacefully went home to be with his Lord in his 72nd year.

Beloved husband of Anne Schuringa (nee Kloet)
for 48 wonderful years.
Beloved father and grandfather of:
Harold & Janette Schuringa – Whitney, Jennifer and Erik
Spiro & Pauline Schuringa Misevski – Matthew and Tonia
Gwen & Tom Heetderks – David, Ryan and Erica
Sharon Schuringa and Mike Svetkoff and Jill.

Beloved brother of Anna Broos (predeceased by Gerrit Broos); Trudy & Rev. Hans Uittenbosch; Rita & Andy Knibbe; Joe & Mary Schuringa. Brother-in-law to Martin & Marilyn Kloet, John & Trudy Kloet, Leni Blyleven-Kloet, Adrian & Wilma Kloet, predeceased by Ann Kloet, Hans and Teena Kloet, predeceased by Dick Kloet, Peter and Rita Kloet, George and Ada Kloet, and uncle to many nieces and nephews.

We rejoice that Fred is with his LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are thankful for the love and life that we shared with him. His life was a testimony to many and his love for the LORD was reflected in all that he did. We rejoice in the knowledge of seeing him again.

The funeral was held on June 28, 2006 at Harvest Family Church, Mississauga, Ontario, Dr. Earlby Coulter and Rev. Brent Coulter officiated.

Correspondence: Anne Schuringa, 2176 Whitecliffe Way
Oakville ON L6M 4W2

Psalm 91

1946 July 25 2006

If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31

The Lord has blessed

TEUNIS AND ADRIANA VERDONK

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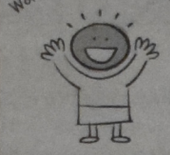

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John Suk, President
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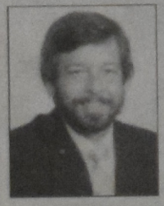

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Kim Jong Il's test missile

Donald Kirk

SEOUL, South Korea – North Korea may have achieved what it was planning all along when it poised its long-range Taepodong II missile for launch: an uproar in the United States and Japan over the possibility of a test flight into the northern Pacific beyond Japan.

The strategy, in the view of analysts here, was to gain the attention needed to try to draw the United States into negotiations on the North's terms – and also deepen the rift between the United States and South Korea, which is intent on pursuing reconciliation with the North.

"Kim Jong Il wants to demonstrate his leadership," says Kim Koo Sub, senior researcher at the Institute for Defense Analysis here. "He wants instability in the US-South Korea alliance" – a precursor to eventual withdrawal of the remaining 29,500 US troops in Korea, as long demanded by Pyongyang.

That aim emerged Wednesday when a senior North Korean diplomat at the UN said he was aware of US concerns about "our missile test launch," but that North Korea was interested in talking one-on-one. The inference was that North Korea would put off test-firing the missile depending on the US response – and then on the outcome of talks.

According to this logic, North Korea was just staking out a basis for negotiations by declaring its right to have a long-range missile and to fire it in violation of its own self-imposed moratorium.

In what has become a dangerous bargaining game, the United States is sure to spurn this overture while demanding that North Korea return to six-party talks designed to get the North to abandon its entire nuclear weapons program – not just the launch of a missile theoretically capable of reaching the US west coast with a nuclear warhead.

Japan is perhaps more concerned than the US, since a test-firing would probably send a missile over its country, so it could be expected to support this position. Japan has warned of "stern measures" in retaliation for a missile.

North Korea, in calling for talks, is not about to consider giving up its nuclear warheads without a massive infusion of aid. Its immediate concern is the ban imposed by the US Treasury on all financial firms doing business with the North. The ban has forced the Banco Delta Asia in Macao, the biggest conduit for $100 "supernotes" counterfeited in the North, to freeze North Korean accounts.

"The US is now strangling North Korea economically," says Kim Tae Woo, also a senior research scholar at the Institute for Defense Analysis, affiliated with South Korea's Defense Ministry. "Their immediate objective is to make the US step back."

Mr. Kim advances that view – and not what he sees as overblown suggestions of a US military response – as the primary reason why the North provoked what has become a "missile crisis."

He says the US missile-defense system would be largely ineffective against a single Taepodong streaking over Japan to a splashdown in the northern Pacific – the furthest the missile is likely to go on a test run even if, when fully fueled, it might some day be able to go as far as the American mainland.

Despite a missile shield on bases in Hawaii and the west coast, the only real capability the United States now has to come even close to the Taepodong in the air is by firing missiles aboard Aegis-class destroyers deployed between Korea and Japan and also in the northern Pacific. But even that defense is uncertain at best.

The system on these destroyers includes antimissile missiles, but the US is not likely to use them unless North Korea aims a missile at either the US or Japan. US satellite imagery would be able to determine within minutes after liftoff exactly where it was going.

The US ambassador to South Korea, Alexander Vershbow, a sometimes outspoken advocate of toughness in dealing with North Korea, made plain his views after a lengthy meeting with Kim Dae Jung, the former president who proclaimed the "sunshine policy" of reconciliation with the North. Six years ago Mr. Kim received the Nobel Peace prize after opening a new era in North-South reconciliation by flying to Pyongyang for the only inter-Korean summit. The success was later tarnished by revelations that his government had secretly funnelled more than $500 million to the North before the summit.

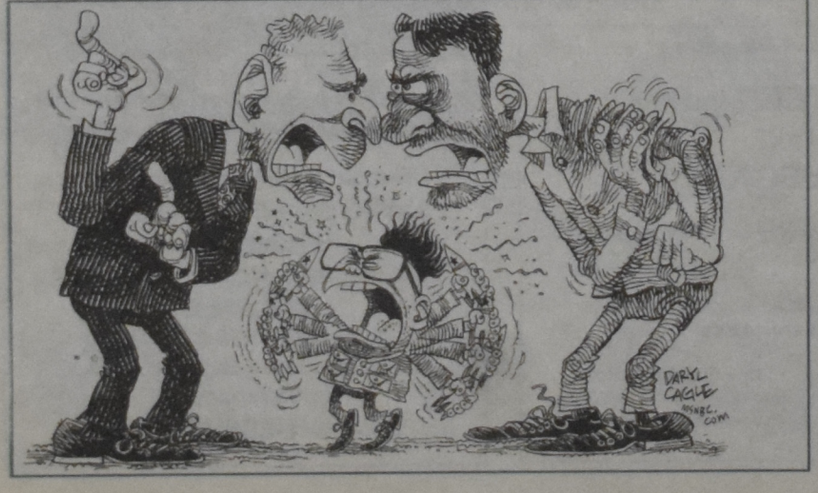
Vershbow and Kim found common ground in the view that a missile launch would deepen the North's isolation, but the ambassador did not go along with the view that the US should make conciliatory gestures.

Rather, he said six-party talks in Beijing should resume as a precondition for anything "despite the North Korean boycott" – a reference to the North's refusal to attend talks after the US Treasury's actions.

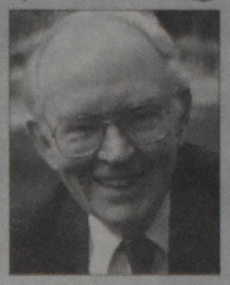
And, said Vershbow, "This missile has military capability," the more fearsome considering North Korea's "illegal development of nuclear weapons."

Vershbow's words may have had some impact on the South, which has been reluctant to join the US and Japan in strong condemnation of a launch. Unification Minister Lee Jeong Seok said "additional assistance would be difficult" – a scarcely veiled threat to hold off on promises to provide several hundred thousand tons of food and fertilizer in the event of a launch.

According to numerous reports that have filtered out of the country, untold numbers of North Koreans have starved to death as a result of famines over the last several years, very likely caused by government policies. However, according to *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, agencies offering food aid are not allowed direct contact with the people. They are forced to administer aid through the Korean military, so almost all have stopped their work.



Gerald Vandezande to receive honorary doctorate



The Institute for Christian Studies announced June 27 that Mr. Gerald Vandezande will be awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters at its next convocation, on October 20, 2006. This is the first honorary degree ever offered by ICS under its newly revised Province of Ontario degree granting legislation.

Gerald has long supported the mission of the Institute for Christian Studies to offer Christian graduate education and played a key role in helping ICS obtain the right to offer provincially accredited graduate degrees.

For thirty-five years until his retire-ment in 1998, Gerald worked with Citizens for Public Justice to promote justice in Canada and during that time had significant impact on social legislation and public policy debates. Deeply motivated by his Christian faith, Gerald continues to advocate for policy alternatives on issues such as aboriginal and refugee rights, educational justice, poverty, the environment, and national unity. Gerald has written many articles and books, the most recent being *Justice, Not Just Us: Faith Perspectives and National Priorities*.

We may add to the information provided above by the ICS that before becoming the primary spokesman of the CPJ, Gerald was an indefatigable organizer and promoter for the Christian Labour Association of Canada. Over the years, too, he has contributed innumerable articles on social issues to *Christian Courier*, always in terms of a Kingdom perspective.

If the Reformed community in Canada has grown a bit smug and lazy over the years, the fault is not with Gerald, who has never stopped prodding us and reminding us of our responsibility toward those needing help. He has also worked ceaselessly to fashion a society in which there will be fewer of those who need help.

Gerald was invested into the Order of Canada by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, on October 17, 2001. The citation called him a "powerful and respected voice for social justice." Gerald was awarded the 2005 Arthur Kroeger College Award in Ethics in Public Affairs on February 9, 2005.

Gerald is a member of the Grace Christian Reformed Church in Scarborough. He and his wife, Wynne, live in Agincourt, Ontario. They have two daughters, Janice and Karen, and four grandchildren.

The Institute For Christian Studies is a Christian graduate school that offers M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Philosophy. Faculty and students at ICS address contemporary thought in the way Jesus asked us: by bringing salt and light to the task of higher education – adding the flavor, the conviction and the illumination of faith to their studies. ICS graduates teach at many public and private colleges and universities around the globe and play leadership roles in other areas of society. The ICS is an affiliated member of the Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto, and an affiliate of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.